TECHNIQUES FROM THE PROS YOU CAN USE AT HOME

Savora World of Authentic Cuisine Special Issue DINING IN

The Ultimate Chocolate Caramel Tart

PAGE 102

The Best New Cut of Steak

PAGE 108

Delicious Homemade Potato Chips

PAGE 96

12 Restaurants

That Matter

Inside America's top kitchens; plus 14 recipes from our favorite chefs

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NUMBER 119
APRIL 2009

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THE OREGON CHEF

AS IN SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE IN TURNING RICH SOIL INTO PARKING LOTS FOR STRIP MALLS WHERE WE EAT FOOD SHIPPED IN A CAN FROM TIMBUKTU, BUT RATHER IN TURNING RICH SOIL INTO RICH, FLAVORFUL BEETS AND BERRIES AND HAZELNUTS AND WITH THEM CONCOCTING DELICIOUS, DELECTABLE FOOD FROM YOUR OWN SOIL.

AMEN.

There is a chef called Greg Higgins who rode out west—on his bicycle—and when he got to Oregon, as one might imagine after having biked all the way from New York, he was very hungry. Down in the valley there were organic hazelnuts and squash, broccoli and herbs, apples and pears, beets and berries. And over to his right in the huge open spaces were big, beautiful beef cattle roaming freely about, munching on grass. On the coast he found fresh line-caught salmon and cod, pink shrimp and Dungeness crab. And as his belly grumbled away, he had a crazy idea. He called up Cory Schreiber and Vitaly Paley and other Oregonian chefs, who too were hungry to create something extraordinary, and they made a pact. Their goal: to create an Oregon cuisine using local wine, meats, fruits and vegetables. Food full of unique Oregon flavor and the peace of mind that the rich Oregon soil would stay rich Oregon soil. And not to their surprise, after a while, people began to say, "Let's eat Oregonian tonight. And tomorrow night. And the next night." And now it is easy to find delicious Oregon cuisine: Come to Oregon.

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Bon Appetit!



SAVEUR

SPECIAL ISSUE

12 Restaurants That Matter

FOR THIS SPECIAL issue of SAVEUR, we sought out the country's most inventive, dedicated, and soulful chefs and restaurateurs to create a vivid portrait of dining in America today. Starting on page 57, we honor 12 influential establishments—some haute, some down-home, all uniformly excellent—that embody everything that is good about the exhilarating business of bringing joy to others through food. Plus, recipes from the country's best restaurants.



Cover Chocolate caramel tart from Marlow & Sons. PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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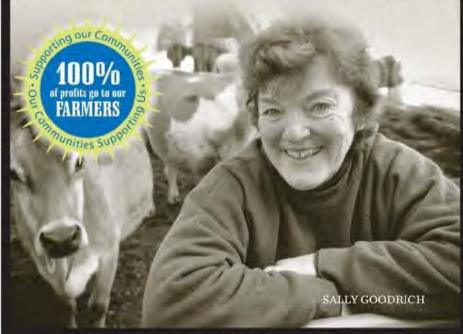
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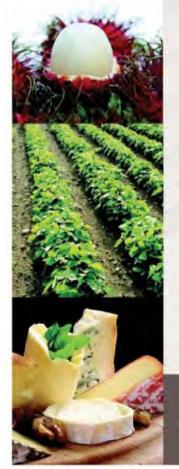
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FIRST

Born to Eat

A passionate restaurant devotee comes full circle

BOUT A YEAR AGO, WHEN the editors at SAVEUR first started talking about doing a special restaurant issue, plenty of ideas and questions came flooding forth. Should we cover America's top 50 places to eat? Or maybe just the top 25? Or what about the ten most influential chefs? We knew that, whatever we decided on, devoting an issue to great restaurants marked something of a departure for the magazine, which has always taken an egalitar-

ian approach to the world of food, one that gave the desires of the home cook pride of place. Eventually we realized that a conventional best-of ranking wasn't what we wanted. What we did want was to find a way to honor a few restaurants—some fancy, some not—that we love and respect; in short, ones that represent the best of dining in America today.

I think the plan finally jelled when Dana Bowen, the deputy editor who ultimately took the lead in putting this issue together, summed up her thoughts on the subject during a meeting. "Restaurants are special

places," I remember her saying. "Everybody has to eat, but going out to eat is a choice. It says a lot about who we are." She'd captured the idea behind this issue perfectly: dining is about much more than just eating and cooking. It reflects a desire to commune not only with great food but also with other people, other experiences.

Dana should know. Before she became an editor at SAVEUR—and she is one of the most dedicated and talented this magazine has

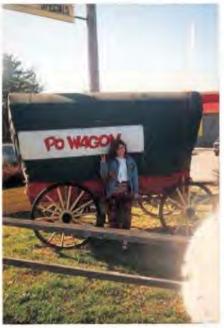
known—she lived and breathed restaurants. "I had my first restaurant job before I could drive," she says. "It was at this cheesy knock-off of Cracker Batrel called Po Folks, in North Carolina, but the food was really good." It's safe to say she moved up after that; during college, she worked at multiple restaurants before becoming a server at the Fearrington House, near Chapel Hill, North Carolina; it is located in the farmhouse where the influential Southern chef

Bill Neal worked before opening the acclaimed Crook's Corner (see page 24). After traveling in Europe for a year on a writer's grant, she landed a front-of-the-house job at the legendary Commander's Palace in New Orleans (see page 66), a city where dining out is nothing short of a religion. By the mid-1990s, Dana had gone from working in restaurants to writing about them, for a number of publications including, eventually, the New York Times, where she followed dining trends, profiled chefs, and was a reviewer for the hugely popular "\$25 and Under" column.

where she followed dining trends, profiled chefs, and was a reviewer for the hugely popular "\$25 and Under" column.

During all that time, Dana admitted to me a few months ago, she'd harbored "back-of-the-house envy". "Working in all those dining rooms gave me a lot of insight into humanity," she said, "but I always regretted a little not working in the kitchens." Yet in a sense, she added, "reporting stories and tasting the recipes for this issue finally took me into the back of the house, by proxy at least". Dana, we couldn't be happier to oblige. —JAMES

OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief



Deputy editor Dana Bowen at age 16, pictured on the site of her first restaurant job.



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FARE

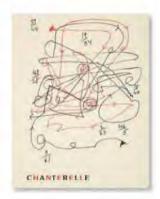
Memories and Marvels from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More



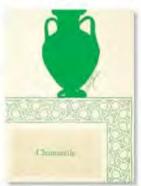
















The Art of Eating

In 1979, When David and Karen Waltuck opened their first restaurant, Chanterelle, in the SoHo neighborhood of New York City, the area was home to a burgeoning art scene. Soon Chanterelle not only earned the accolades of critics and New Yorkers at large—thanks to David's innovative, French-inspired cuisine and Karen's warm and welcoming demeanor in the dining room—but also became a sort of community center for local artists, a place to celebrate an opening or forge new partnerships.

SoHo has changed since then, but over the years the Waltucks have found a way to preserve the neighborhood's creative legacy: on the covers of Chanterelle's menus, which feature a rotating collection of original works on paper donated by local artists. The sculptor who goes by the name Marisol designed the inaugural cover in November 1979: a spare and striking sketch of a flower. Since then, the collection has grown to comprise more than 60 works by a veritable who's who of late-20th-century artists from a number of milieus: the choreographer Merce Cunningham drew a diagram of a tango, the poet Allen Ginsberg contributed a whimsi-

cal photograph of a young girl, and the painter and sculptor Keith Haring offered a line drawing. Viewed together, the menus constitute a visual time capsule of New York's creative life over the past 30 years.

Chanterelle moved from its original SoHo location south to TriBeCa in 1989, and today retired covers line the walls of the restaurant's current home in an artistic reinterpretation of the time-honored "wall of fame". The Waltucks won't name their favorites, insisting that each one is cherished because it represents for them a particular moment in time. The restaurant still introduces a new menu cover every six months; a design by the painter Chuck Close will grace the restaurant's 30th-anniversary menu this November. As David Waltuck puts it, "Just like we constantly change the food we serve, changing our menu covers keeps things fresh and alive." —Leah Koenig

Chanterelle menu art by (left to right, top row to bottom row) Donald Evans, Roy Lichtenstein, Cy Twombly, Robert Indiana, Merce Cunningham, Eric Fischl, Cletus Johnson, Michael Hurson, and Philip Taaffe.



"I wish I had a button to pless every time I had a coffee order. You wouldn't believe how many cups I serve a day, how many pots I make."



"Sometimes it feels a little like a soap opera, but I believe in teamwork."

Proud to Serve

OR MOST PEOPLE, the experience of eating out doesn't often include maître d's, headwaiters, or sommeliers. Usually, what we seek when we go to a restaurant isn't to be fawned over but to sit down to honest food served by honest people—people like Sandie Lancellotti of the Bronx, New York. I made the acquaintance of Lancellotti when I stopped for breakfast at her place of work, Quality Cafe Restaurant, a 60-seat diner in the Pelham Bay neighborhood. I went back a few weeks later to see how this Bronx-born waitress spends a typical morning. Lancellotti starts her shift at 6:15 A.M. with a quick cup of brewed coffee (which a neon sign in the restaurant's window proclaims to be the "World's Best"). By seven o'clock, the morning rush is on, and the regulars have begun to stream in: nurses, construction workers, city employees, teenagers heading to school, and more. "I love my customers," she says. "I'm just out and open, I guess. You'd never catch me behind a desk." — Sarah Karnasiewicz



"We just got a computed about a month ago, but I still white every order down to the exact detail. If I mess up what I put in, I'm in thouble."



"I serve a lot of eggs, a lot of omeletres, a lot of pancakes. People just love breakfast all day."



"It's a fickle business, and you've got good days and bad days, but I like to hustle for my money."

FARE



R EQUIRED READING for bartenders used to be a single text: Mr. Boston: Official Bartender's Guide, a handy compendium of drink recipes that has remained in print since 1935. Nowadays, though, cocktail connoisseurs hungry for richer material have spurred a resurgence of interest in other classic bar manuals, too. We recently got our hands on one such gem: the 1954 edition of Bottoms Up (Greystone Press; shown below), a racily illustrated collection of drinks gathered from some of the mid-20th century's most famous restaurants, bars, and bons vivants. Among our favorite entries from bygone New York City insti-

tutions (shown above) are the Fur Collar (a blend of apricot brandy, vodka, and orange juice from The Colony; center and middle right), the Green Tree (a crème de menthe cocktail from Lindy's; top center and top right), the Mr. Soule Special (a brandy and citrus concoction created by the proprietor of Le Pavillon; bottom left and top left); and the good old Manhattan (bottom center and bottom right; SEE SAVEUR.COM/BOTTOMSUP for recipes). Volumes like Bottoms Up evoke an era in which the bartender's craft was as celebrated as the chef's-a notion that's popular once again today and has even made an impression on Mr. Boston

(John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009); it includes contributions from cocktail authorities like Dale DeGroff and SAVEUR wine and spirits editor David Wondrich, as well as notes on garnishes and the history of classic cocktails. We'll raise our glass to that.

—The Editors

AGENDA: MILESTONES IN AMERICAN DINING



FEBRUARY

2

Birthday:

HOWARD JOHNSON

1896

The entrepreneur Howard Deering Johnson was 27 years old when he launched a legendary career selling America's ultracreamy ice cream from his drugstore soda fountain. By 1940, his empire comprised 200 franchise restaurants, all of them topped with a bright orange roof meant to lure drivers off the road.

MARCH

29

Birthday:

BENEDETTO CAPALDO, FATHER OF THE "SUB" SANDWICH

Salerno, Italy, 1890

At the height of World War II, Benedetto Capaldo, a deli owner in New London, Connecticut, prepared 1,000 Italian sandwiches (above) a day for the navy submarine base in nearby Groton. Customers started calling the sandwiches "subs", after Capaldo's best customer, and the moniker has stuck ever since. MARCH

30

Anniversary:

PULLMAN DINING CAR INTRODUCED

Chicago, 1868

Before the invention of dining cars, most train travelers packed their own food or ate while in the station at railside restaurants. But custom changed in 1868 when the Pullman Palace Car Company unveiled a railcar built exclusively for on-board food preparation, effectively bringing dining rooms onto the rails.

JUNE

8

Anniversary:

SEGREGATED RESTAURANTS DEEMED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Washington, D.C., 1953
Despite an 1872 law that ostensibly outlawed it, segregation continued to plague America's capital well into the 20th century. But in 1953, a group of activists, led by an 89-year-old writer named Mary Church Terrell, won a Supreme Court decision that brought





DECEMBER

13

Anniversary:

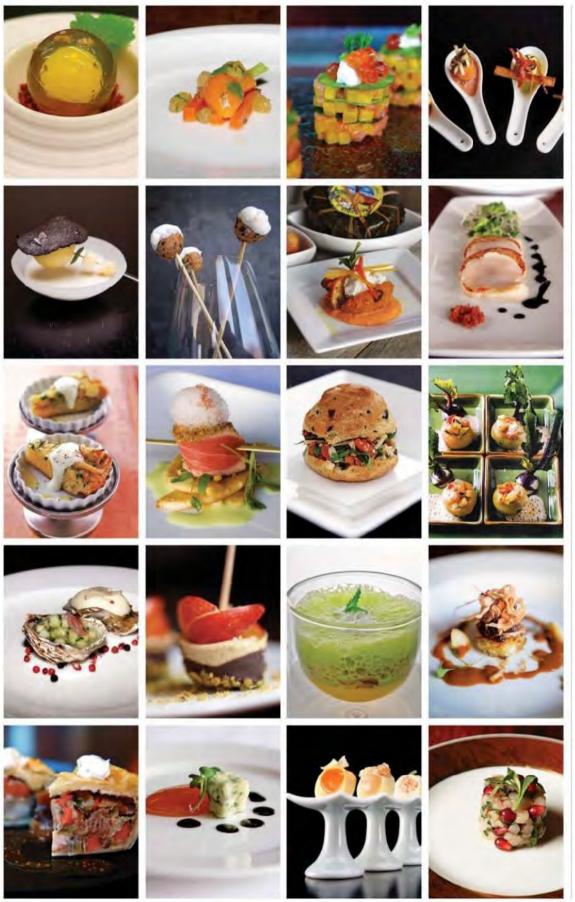
DELMONICO'S OPENS

New York City, 1827

Italian immigrants John and Peter Delmonico helped introduce fine dining to America when they opened their first café, Delmonico and Brother, at 23 William Street. Their empire grew to nine locations but could not outlive Prohibition. The restaurant was raided by "dry" agents in 1921 and 1922; by 1923 it could no longer afford to operate.



FARE



And to Begin...

E LOVE amuse-bouches, those one- or two-bite treats that many chefs present to diners before the first course as a way to entice the appetite. Often as much fun to look at as they are to eat, such morsels (whose name translates loosely from the French as please the mouth) grew out of the nouvelle cuisine movement of the 1970s, in which French-trained chefs built meals out of multiple small, colorful courses. When we asked chefs around the country to send us examples of their signature amuse-bouches (shown at left), we found a range of culinary philosophies represented; some see them as a means of recrafting surplus materials, while others approach them with equal reverence as an entrée. "Amuse-bouches are an opportunity to push boundaries," says Daniel Humm, executive chef at Eleven Madison Park in New York City, whose amuse-bouches include an assemblage of lobster,

© Descriptions of all the amuse-bouches shown at left at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE119

lemongrass, and curry (shown left; fourth row, second from right). At Restaurant Tallent in Bloomington, Indiana, chef David Tallent encourages line cooks to pack their creations (such as vegetarian muffulettas; shown third row, second from right) with as many taste sensations as possible. But Rick Tramonto, chef at the acclaimed Chicago restaurant Tru (where starters include caramelized onion tarts; shown third row, far left) and author of the cookbook Amuse-Bouche (Random House, 2002), perhaps sums up the trifle's significance the best. "It's my way of saying, 'Welcome, I hope you enjoy your meal." - Jayanthi Daniel

SOME PEOPLE ARE STRUCK SPEECHLESS BY ITALIAN ART.

MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE THEIR MOUTHS ARE FULL.

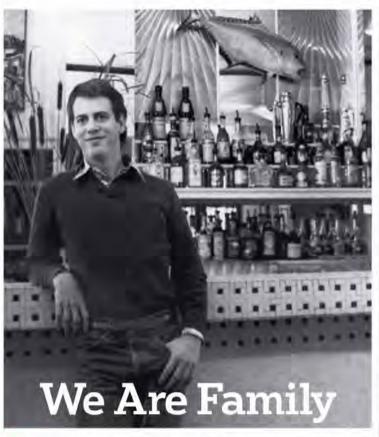


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ACH ERA has its breeding-ground restaurants—places whose kitchens act as incubators for pioneering young talent. One of the more famous in our own epoch is the 32-year-old River Café in New York City, which nurtured the successful restaurateurs Larry Forgione, David Burke, and Charlie Palmer. (See "Fertile Grounds", at right, for other examples.) One of my favorite breeding-ground restaurants-one of my favorite restaurants, period-is perhaps less renowned nationally, but its graduates are no less gifted, and few places offer a more inspiring model for hands-on culinary education.

The restaurant, Crook's Corner, sits in a funky old taxi depot on the fringes of Chapel Hill, a university town in central North Carolina. I didn't have an inkling of its significance when I first visited, in

The late chef Bill Neal, of Crook's Corner, in the mid-1980s, above.

the late 1980s; to me, Crook's—with its walls of folk art and bar covered in black-and-white tile—was simply the most popular place in town. The vibe was elegant but unstuffy, and the fare put a fresh spin on Southern comforts; the house favorite was and still is a rich mess of cheese grits with shrimp, mushrooms, and bacon, a riff on a Lowcountry staple (see SAVEUR, COM/CROOKS for the recipe).

The chef, a self-taught cook named Bill Neal, opened Crook's Corner in 1982, a few years after he and his ex-wife, Moreton, had launched their first restaurant, the more formal La Residence. When other restaurants were dotting their menus with sun-dried tomatoes, Neal was proudly cooking with and writing about Southern ingredients, like country ham, that had long been relegated to the home cook's repertoire. His first cookbook, Bill Neal's Southern Cooking (UNC Press, 1985), celebrates those foods, and it drew aspiring young chefs his way.

Neal had a thing against cooking-school kids; when the Culinary Institute of America grads Ben and Karen Barker, now the chef-owners of Magnolia Grill in Durham, North Carolina, applied for a job with Neal, he turned them away; Moreton later hired them at "La Res". His staff was untrained: people like Robert Stehling, who spent six years with Neal before founding the Hominy Grill in Charleston, South Carolina; and John Currence, who opened the now landmark City Grocery in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1991. In Neal's kitchen, talent trumped hierarchy, "I started at Crook's as a dishwasher," Currence told me recently. "It seemed like a week later, I was the pastry chef." Since Neal's death, in 1992, many of his students have spread the gospel of regional Southern cooking far and wide. But others (like Bill Smith, who now runs the Crook's kitchen) have stayed on in Chapel Hill, helping transform the area into one of the nation's most exciting places to eat.

A certain protégé of Neal's not only worked at Crook's; he grew up there. I remember Matt Neal, the oldest of Neal's three children, when he worked behind the bar; he remembers peeling buckets of shrimp after school before graduating to the line. Over the years, I've run into Matt and his wife, Sheila, at the local farmers' market, and recently I stumbled across their first restaurant, a lunch counter not far from Crook's called Neal's Deli. Inside, the couple prepared biscuits, housecured pastrami, and more. The food was darned good-rooted in the region but inspired by the world around it. His father, I imagined, would be very proud. —Dana Bowen 🥍

THE PANTRY, page 115: More information about Chanterelle, Quality Cafe Restaurant, and the restaurants mentioned above.

Fertile Grounds

The following influential restaurants are as legendary for the talent they've fostered as they are for the food they've served.

—Jayanthi Daniel

LA CÔTE BASQUE

(1958-2007) Chef Jean-Jacques Rachou helmed the New York City kitchen from 1979 to 2007 and mentored a cast of culinary stars, including Charlie Palmer (1979-1981) of Aureole in New York City, Charlie Palmer Steak in Las Vegas, and Dry Creek Kitchen in Healdsburg, California; Todd English (1984-1986) of Olives in Charlestown, Massachusetts, The Libertine in New York City, and Da Campo Osteria in Florida; and David Bouley (1981) of Bouley, Upstairs, and Secession, all in New York City.

THE QUILTED GIRAFFE

(1979-1992) This Manhattan institution was beloved for its four-star American and French-inspired cuisine. Alums (with their dates of tenure) include **Peter Hoffman** (1980) of the acclaimed New York restaurants Savoy and Back Forty; **Tom Colicchio** (1984) of the Manhattan landmarks Gramercy Tavern (1994-2006) and Craft; and **Katherine Alford** (1983-1989), the current test kitchen director at the Food Network.

STARS

(1984-1999) This San Francisco restaurant, founded by chef Jeremiah Tower, was one of the nation's first outposts of market-driver "California cuisine". Alums include Clark Frasier and Mark Gaier (1984-1986) of Arrows and MC Perkins Cove, both in Maine; Mario Batali (1987) of the New York Italian meccas Babbo, Lupa, Otto, and Del Posto; and Steve Ells (1989, 1990-1991), the founder of Chipotle Mexican Grill.



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BOOK REVIEW

Kitchen Experiential

These cookbooks offer unprecedented access to the minds and kitchens of restaurant chefs

BY SARA DICKERMAN

T's A LONG, LONG WAY FROM Heston Blumenthal to Kenny Shopsin. Blumenthal owns the Fat Duck restaurant in Bray, England. He possesses three Michelin stars and, as a leader of the culinary movement often referred to as hypermodern cuisine, regularly confounds his customers with dishes that fool the brain and astound the tongue: egg custard scrambled in a bath of liquid nitrogen, say, or a plate of tapioca "sand" topped with shellfish and served with an iPod that plays sounds of the ocean. Shopsin, on the other hand, manned the stove for decades at his namesake diner-style New York City eatery, where he took short-order cooking to its wildest heights. His menu once ran to 900 items, including macaroni-and-cheese pancakes and chicken fried hamburgers.

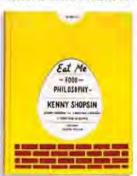
All the same, Blumenthal and Shopsin have at least two things in common: they've both written books, and both of their publications are



prime examples of an increasingly popular form I like to call the portmanteau cookbook. Like an overstuffed suitcase, Blumenthal's lavish *The Big Fat Duck Cookbook* (Bloomsbury, 2008; \$250), Shopsin's *Eat Me: The Food and Philosophy of Kenny Shopsin* (Knopf, 2008; \$24.95), and their ilk pack multiple genres into a single volume. Part journal, part personal culinary manifesto, and part scrapbook, such tomes are typically punc-

tuated with eccentric illustrations, reproductions of menus, or candid snapshots of their authors' kitchens.

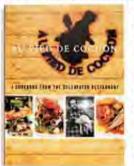
Every good restaurant is a utopia of sorts, a world made up of not only food but also a chef's very personal sense of generosity, panache, even morality. With its artifacts and asides, a portmanteau cookbook seeks to convey such complexities. It's an approach very different from what we've seen in chef's cookbooks of previous eras. Take, for instance, the method cookbook, favored by turn-of-the-20th-century chefs and writers like Charles Ranhofer of New York City's Delmonico's and the great London-based French chef Auguste Escoffier. Written by chefs for chefs,



method cookbooks read impersonally, composed as they are of hundreds of terse recipes and diagrams. Another type of chef's cookbook, popular in the later decades of the 20th century, speaks explicitly to the home cook. Polished, approachable, and typically the product of a collaboration between a chef and a ghostwriter, books of this kind are filled with user-friendly recipes that have little to do with the food that is actually cooked in the restaurants they profess to represent.

Times have changed. Twenty-first-century gastronomes, gorged on a dishy diet of *Top Chef* and Anthony Bourdain, want to know what life is really like in a restaurant. Enter the portmanteau cookbook, which doesn't, as a rule, dumb down recipes for the at-home audience; instead, it records every ounce of labor that goes into each amuse bouche. At the same time, through its snapshots and anecdotes, it aims to conjure the inner workings of the restaurant and the inner life of the chef.

THE SCRAPBOOK IMPULSE IS not entirely new to cookbook publishing. The great French restaurateur Fernand Point, mentor to pioneers of nouvelle cuisine like Alain Chapel and Paul Bocuse, made pencil sketches and kept a notebook of culinary epigrams, many of which can be found, with recipes, in *Ma Gastronomie*, compiled some years after Point's death, in 1955, and recently reprinted by Overlook/Rookery. But it wasn't until the beginning of this century that the portmanteau cookbook truly arrived, with the Montreal chef Martin Picard's unexpected hit *Au Pied*



de Cochon: The Album (self-published in 2006 and now available in paperback from Douglas & McIntyre). It is loaded with gritty documentary photographs of Picard hunting deer and canning tomatoes, sentimental tributes to his culinary mentors, illustrations of randy pigs and buxom ladies, and, of course, recipes for Picard's hallmark meat-centric and foie grasplumped Quebecois cuisine, Rustic dishes like lamb shank confit and cipaille (a traditional meat pie) are not difficult to prepare; the reci-

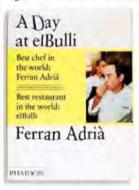
pes are, on the whole, straightforward enough, but they're only part of the equation. Such a capacious spirit as Picard's could hardly be expressed within the confines of a mere recipe compilation.

Nor could a traditional cookbook contain Kenny Shopsin's outspoken, intensely idiosyncratic approach to food. *Eat Me* (coauthored with the food writer Carolyn Carreño) is portmanteau all the way, cluttered with overexposed family snapshots, close-ups of Shopsin's tools (including a caulk gun–like device typically used at Taco Bell for squirting sour cream, repurposed for peanut butter), and sidebars holding forth on matters of business, customer service, and, yes, cooking. One passage, on egg cookery, is a virtual Zen meditation delivered in brawny prose: "There are certain foods that are not malleable but dictatorial in how they are cooked. That's definitely true of eggs, which is why a lot of places,

SARA DICKERMAN's most recent article for SAVEUR was "Any Given Sunday" (October 2008).

probably most places, turn out eggs that really suck. When you're cooking eggs, you have to give up your macho stance and do what they say." A philosopher of the stove, Shopsin knows when to whip up something from scratch (each bowl of soup at Shopsin's is made to order) and when to fake it (he says his customers prefer his ersatz crêpes, made from battered tortillas, to the real thing). His pragmatic approach extends to the book's very doable recipes for comforting fare ranging from french toast to Senegalese chicken soup.

No one knows better how to trick his customers' palates than Blumenthal, for whom the unexpected gesture is practically a raison d'être. Blumenthal's pricey tome is less scrappy and ribald than Picard's and Shopsin's and more grandiose; it even boasts an epilogue consisting of a collection of food-science papers. Still, however highfalutin his approach, Blumenthal projects a profound need to be understood, whether in the lively culinary memoir that opens the book or in his short-story-length recipe introductions. Without investing in a laboratory stocked with equipment and food stabilizers, I couldn't hope to duplicate creations like his quail in jelly, with its pea mousse puréed in a Pacojet food processor, its foie gras custard cooked en sous vide, and its dissolving "breath strips" infused with the scent of oak. Even so, the recipe section is a delight; consulting it is a little like perusing a travelogue for an exotic country I know I'll never visit.



So IT GOES WITH A number of recent cookbooks from other techno-savvy chefs. Ferran Adrià's *A Day at El Bulli* (Phaidon, 2008; \$49.95), for example, is largely a photojournalistic account of the restaurant's operations, coupled with recipes for virtuoso preparations such as pumpkin seed—oil bonbons encased in caramel bubbles and freezedried miso foam. Unfortunately, Adrià's prose, in translation at least, lacks the effervescence of his culinary inventions. Another cutting-edge

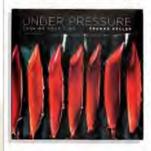
chef, Grant Achatz, has issued the massive Alinea (Ten Speed Press, 2008;

\$50), named for the Chicago restaurant where he pushes ingredients to their limits and groups them in ecstatic assemblages. A plate holding a springtime composition of tofu, ham, peas, and yuzu pudding, for instance, arrives atop a pillow that slowly exudes lavender vapor. The book's images, though stunning, project a solemnity that seems at odds with the relaxed and friendly



dining experience that Alinea is consistently applauded for and with Achatz's food, which, though high-tech, is also disarmingly playful.

A specific technology is the focus of Under Pressure: Cooking Sous



Vide (Artisan, 2008; \$75) by Thomas Keller, chef-proprietor of the French Laundry in the Napa Valley and Per Se in Manhattan. Though armchair gastronauts can feast their eyes on Deborah Jones's photographs, the book is chiefly a chef-to-chef primer on the sous vide method, which consists of cooking vacuum-packed food in precisely heated water baths to the point of optimal tender-



ASPARAGUS WITH CITRUS AND OREGANO

SERVES 4

Microwaving asparagus in a tightly covered dish with a little water and olive oil—a method recommended by the chef Andrew Carmellini in his book *Urban Italian* (Bloomsbury, 2008)—is a fast, easy way to steam the vegetable while preserving its color, texture, and flavor.

- 2 oranges, preferably navel
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 2 scallions, finely chopped Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 16 stalks large green asparagus (about 1 lb.)
- ② Zest 1 of the oranges; set zest aside. Slice cff the ends of each orange. Working with one orange at a time, set an orange on end; with a small knife, slice off and discard the peel and the white pith. Holding the orange in your hand, use a knife to cut the orange segments away from their membranes. (See page 30 for detailed instructions.) Place segments in a bowl and set aside. Over a separate bowl, squeeze the remaining orange pulp to extract any remaining juice. Repeat with second orange. Whisk 4 tbsp. oil, lemon juice, oregano, and scallions into orange juice and season with salt and pepper; set dressing aside.
- ② Cut off about 1" from the tough end of the asparagus and transfer asparagus to a 9" x 13" microwavable baking dish. Sprinkle asparagus with reserved orange zest and drizzle with remaining oil and 1/4 cup water. Cover pan tightly with plastic wrap and microwave on high heat for 2 minutes. Rotate dish and microwave until asparagus is just tender, about 2 minutes more. Uncover and drain off cooking liquid. Toss asparagus with reserved citrus dressing and season with salt. Top with orange segments. Serve immediately or at room temperature.

It's pondering dinner.



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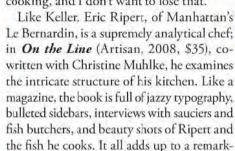


that selves

ON THE LINE

ness and succulence. It's a timely volume that helps to demystify a technique du jour used in many restaurants, and Keller's philosophical asides provide a welcome sense of perspective on a way of cooking that, though effective, will never supplant the elemental appeal of sautéing, grilling, or roasting. "When you sauté floured meat in hot fat, the aromas and sounds are important," he writes. "Some dishes are wrapped up in the emotions of cooking itself and help us to appreciate what we're

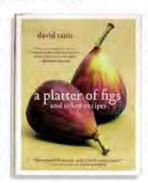
cooking, and I don't want to lose that."



ably thorough account of how a restaurant's back of house functions, from deliveries to dishwashing. Though the fastidious oceanic cuisine served at Le Bernardin would be nigh impossible to reproduce at home, the recipes in On the Line nevertheless contain expert gestures that translate well to the home kitchen. For instance, Ripert suggests marinating ceviche at the last minute, not hours ahead, for a more delicate result, and he shares a

> technique for poaching salmon very briefly in a shallow bath, until the flesh is just warm to the touch, to achieve a velvety texture.

> Some of this new crop of chef's cookbooks, though fascinating to read, are unlikely to be of much practical use outside a professional kitchen, but a few exhibit real empathy for the home cook. In A16 Food + Wine (Ten Speed Press, 2008; \$35), chef Nate Appleman and wine director Shelly Lindgren of the restaurant

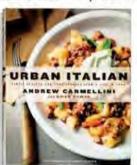


A16 in San Francisco interpret the still-underexplored wine and food of southern Italy with a California sensibility (and teach us how to bone a pig's foot while they're at it). David Tanis of Chez Panisse in Berkeley appeals even more directly to the nonprofessional in A Platter of Figs (Artisan, 2008; \$35), which offers a sense of the special pleasure a restaurant chef takes in cooking for friends. The book not only presents lovely seasonal recipes for dishes that are blessedly unfussy to pre-

pare; it also shows how they can work together in a menu to create a lyrical moment. The same casual grace pervades Christopher Hirsheimer's photographs, Shopsin at SAVEUR.COM/ which portray the food as unpretentious, ISSUE119 imperfect, and absolutely gorgeous.

MA Och With Kenny

My favorite of the lot, though, is Andrew Carmellini's Urban Italian (Bloomsbury, 2008; \$35), an homage to Italian American home



cooking informed by high-end restaurant techniques. Carmellini, formerly of New York's A Voce, co-wrote the book with his wife, Gwen Hyman. It opens, in true portmanteau fashion, with Carmellini's culinary coming-of-age story, up to the point where he finds himself between restaurants and, like Tanis, shifts focus from cooking for a living to cooking for those he loves. The accessible recipes show a working cook's craftiness with flavor (a little North African

spice in a classic ragù) and technique (perfect asparagus cooked in the microwave) that is genuinely inspirational. For those of us who still like to cook from our cookbooks, it delivers the all-important motivation to get out of the reading chair and into the kitchen.

Three Chef's Techniques

The recipes in some chef's cookbooks are as likely to require an immersion circulator as a whisk, but we found a number of user-friendly techniques in the volumes described above. Here are three we return to again and again. - Hunter Lewis

Segmenting Citrus This method for removing juicy citrus sections

from their fibrous membranes Urban Italian. Using a small, sharp knife, cut about one half inch from each end of the fruit, exposing the flesh (below, left). Set the fruit on one end and slice off strips of peel anc white pith, using a steady downof the fruit, rotating the fruit as you

comes from Andrew Carmellini's ward motion and following the curve



go (below, center). Holding the fruit over a bowl, slowly slice between the membrane and the edge of each segment's flesh (below, right); let each segment drop into the bowl.

Washing Greens Simply rinsing salad greens before using them can leave behind unwanted soil. When David Tanis, author of A Platter of Figs, washes salad greens, he follows these steps to eliminate all traces of grit. Fill a clean sink or basin with cold water. Discard the lettuces' tough outer leaves and trim away stems. Gently agitate the lettuces in the water; allow any soil to sink to the bottom. Form a net with your hands and lift the lettuces, allowing water to drain through your fingers.

Transfer greens in batches to several kitchen towels. Stack the towels in layers, roll loosely, and refrigerate.

Making Crème Fraîche This technique for making crème fraîche, also from A Platter of Figs, yields a result that is more luxurious than store-bought versions. Heat 2 cups heavy cream (not ultrapasteurized) over mediumhigh heat to just under a boil. Pour cream into a nonreactive bowl and let cool to room temperature. Stir in 1/4 cup buttermilk or plain yogurt. Cover with a kitchen towel and let sit at room temperature for 12-24 hours, until thickened. The cream will keep in the refrigerator, covered tightly, for about 10 days.

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LIST

9 Signature Dishes

Tastes evolve, but certain restaurant classics stand the test of time

BY BETH KRACKLAUER

WHY DO CERTAIN DISHES remain fixed on restaurant menus for decades while others come and go? The answer is simple: they are unwaveringly, irresistibly good. What's more, by virtue of their stay-

ing power, they offer windows onto the eras in which they were born. Here are nine of our favorite signature restaurant dishes from around the country, listed in order of the years they were invented.

Bookbinder's Famous Snapper Soup (Old Original Bookbinder's, Philadelphia; 1865) Turtle soup was to the 1860s what duck à l'orange was to the 1960s: the epitome of fine dining. This veal stock—based soup with delicate snapping turtle meat is prepared as it's always been at Bookbinder's. You can find versions of it at old-guard restaurants around the country, including the Cape Cod Room at Chicago's Drake Hotel, where, curiously, it's billed as "The Drake's Signature Bookbinder Soup".

② Oysters Rockefeller (Antoine's, New Orleans; 1889) When Jules Alciatore of Antoine's invented this dish, oysters were all the rage in New Orleans and other coastal cities. As their popularity spread inland with refrigerated railcars, so did demand for elegant ways to prepare the shellfish. When chefs started copying the Antoine's dish, they smothered oysters in butter, spinach, bread crumbs, and other toppings and broiled them on the half shell. But the original recipe (still a closely guarded secret) calls for puréeing all of the ingredients into a rich paste and piping them into the oysters' shells before they are baked.

(a) Lobster Savannah (Locke-Ober, Boston, Massachusetts; circa 1930) Though it originated down South, lobster Savannah has been inextricably associated with the Yankee restaurant Locke-Ober since the Great Depression. A mix of lobster, mushrooms, pimentos, sherry, béchamel, and parmesan that's baked in the lobster's shell, the dish is similar to other extravagant classics like lobster thermidor and lobster newburg. When Lydia Shire took over at Locke-Ober, in 2001, she introduced a lighter sauce and replaced the pimentos with fresh red bell peppers.

◆ Orange Beef (Shun Lee Palace, New York City; 1971) There was a time when Chinese food in this country meant (Americanized) Cantonese food. With the opening of Shun Lee Palace on New York's Upper East Side in 1971, the savvy restaurateur Michael Tong made it his mission to expand people's notions of what a Chinese restaurant could be with sophisticated dishes from Shanghai, Beijing, Sichuan, and Hunan. Thus his orange beef, which pairs crisp-fried filet with bittersweet preserved orange, a take on a Hunan specialty. Nowadays, we rarely encounter a Chinese restaurant that doesn't serve it.

(a) Baked Goat Cheese with Garden Lettuces (Chez Panisse, Berkeley, California; 1981) Though salads with medallions of warm, bread crumb—coated goat cheese are now somewhat of a cliché, the one served in Chez Panisse's upstairs café still tastes like the revelation it was when chef Alice Waters introduced it, 28 years ago. At the time, Frenchstyle goat cheese was largely unknown in the States, and baby lettuces came as a delicious shock to diners raised on iceberg and romaine.

6 House Smoked Salmon Pizza (Spago, Beverly Hills, California; 1982) Beginning in the late '70s, Wolfgang Puck put a distinctly glamorous spin on California cuisine, and with the opening of Spago, in 1982, he minted the genre of the "gourmet pizza". Puck says he created his most famous pie on the fly one night, when the actress Joan Collins ordered smoked salmon with brioche and he realized he was out of bread. Thinking fast, he covered a just-baked pizza crust with dill-infused crème fraîche, arranged cold smoked salmon on top, and finished it off with a generous dollop of caviar.

Ochicken for Two Roasted in the Brick

Oven (Zuni Café, San Francisco, California; 1987) Sometimes a dish has a seismic effect, not because of a radical combination of ingredients but simply because it's the best of its kind. The sublime chicken that Judy Rodgers roasts in a wood-fired oven and serves with a Tuscanstyle bread salad at Zuni Café is a case in point. The secret? Salting the bird 24 to 72 hours in advance. The salt slightly cures the flesh, yielding succulent and intensely flavorful results.

(a) Black Cod with Miso (Nobu, New York City; 1994) You could say that without this dish—which calls for a traditional Japanese technique of gently pickling fish in sweet saikyo miso—there would be no Nobu. It was a version of it at chef Nobu Matsuhisa's Los Angeles sushi restaurant that kept Robert De Niro coming back for more. De Niro eventually persuaded the chef to partner with him in opening Nobu in New York in 1994. Today, black cod with miso is a favorite at all 18 Nobu restaurants (and countless imitators) worldwide.





ESSAY

Gilded Age

The lobster palaces of Times Square were America's first theme restaurants

BY WILLIAM GRIMES









N 1899 A CHICAGO restaurateur named Charles Rector made a big decision. He would move to New York. His enormous seafood restaurant in downtown Chicago, Rector's, had earned him a fortune, and patrons visiting from back East convinced him that the brash

Clockwise from top left: Rector's, 1905; mementos from Churchill's and the Café des Beaux Arts, two other grand restaurants of the era.

Rector's style would be a hit in Manhattan.

So, later that same year, Rector hung a signthe restaurant's trademark griffin, twinkling with red, green, and yellow lights-on Broadway at 44th Street and lit the spark for an era in dining that still blazes across the years. Over the next decade and a half, the neighborhood soon to be known as Times Square emerged as a high-energy, brilliantly illuminated entertainment factory, complete with grand hotels, vibrant theaters, and some of the finest, most popular restaurants the city has ever known. These establishments, though seldom celebrated in culinary-history books, signaled a profound change in Americans' approach to dining. With the ascendancy of places like Rector's, luxe restaurants started to take on a more modern, populist feel. They broadened their appeal by serving classic French dishes without the fuss and stuffiness of old-guard restaurants like Delmonico's, also in Manhattan, and they elevated oyster cellar and chophouse favorites to haute cuisine status.

Rector's was the first and the greatest of the lobster palaces, as such eateries came to be called. They constituted a new type of restaurant, catering to high rollers, Wall Street princes, racetrack gamblers, Broadway stars, and gawking tourists desperate to get a taste of the naughty New York nightlife they had read about back in Peoria. These were among the first restaurants to marry food, popular entertainment, and socializing on a large scale. The most flamboyant lobster palaces, whose over-the-top décor evoked the grandeur of antiquity and other eras past, were, in their way, the forerunners of latter-day theme restaurants, from Trader Vic's to the Hard Rock Cafe.

The diners at Rector's, both men and women, wore a lot more jewelry than their more-genteel Fifth Avenue counterparts. They were loud, they tipped on an epic scale, and they came for a show. The food was as rich as the diners. The signature canapés at Rector's were toast points spread with anchovy butter, piled high with crabmeat in thick cream sauce, and covered with a crisp topping of grated parmesan cheese and bread crumbs. One of the most popular entrées was beef tenderloin sautéed in butter and smothered

WILLIAM GRIMES is a former restaurant critic for the New York Times. His book Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York will be published by North Point Press in October.



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ESSAY

in stewed oysters, blanched bone marrow, and bordelaise sauce. Diamond Jim Brady, the financier and celebrated gourmand, took one taste of the Rector's marguery sauce—a thick amalgam of butter, eggs, and white wine—and remarked, "It's so good I could eat it on a Turkish towel."

Before long, diners faced a surfeit of choices in and around Times Square. A favorite with college students was Jack's, a surf-and-turf establishment on Sixth Avenue and 43rd Street. across from the Hippodrome, then the largest theater in the city. Officially it was the Manhattan Oyster and Chop House, but no one called it anything but Jack's, after its owner, Jack Dunston, an Irishman from Cork. Dunston knew how to attract a variegated crowd of politicians, prizefighters, theater stars, newspaper reporters, and, on fall weekends, swarms of Ivy League students in a rowdy post-football mood. The specialties of the house were steaks and chops, steamed clams, broiled lobsters, lobster fat on toast, welsh rabbit, broiled pigs' feet with deviled sauce, and, of course, oysters.

Jack's waiters, chosen for their formidable size as well as their serving ability, dealt firmly with the college boys, a good number of whom came to test the renowned "flying wedge"; when matters looked to be getting out of hand, the waiters at Jack's would wrap cloth napkins around their right hands, close formation, and advance on the troublemakers. Many a Yale or Harvard man, in his autumn years, would fondly recall the night he was thrown out of Jack's and onto the Sixth Avenue streetcar tracks.

When a table at Jack's could not be had, Shanley's beckoned. Located on Broadway just south of Rector's, Shanley's offered the same slap-onthe-back ambience as Jack's, in a vast dining room where patrons feasted on chops, lobsters, and broiled kidneys. If Shanley's was full, there was always Churchill's, a vast dining hall on

More vintage images at SAVEUR.COM/ ISSUE119 Broadway and 49th Street run by James Churchill, a retired police captain with

a suspiciously large amount of money to invest in the restaurant business.

In 1908 came the most eye-popping restaurant of them all, Murray's Roman Gardens. Located on 42nd Street across from the New Amsterdam Theater, John Murray's temple of fantasy blended an assortment of ancient styles and subjects, whisking the unsuspecting diner from Rome to Egypt in the blink of an eye. A profusion of mirrors added to the sense of dislocation; gaping patrons often walked straight

into their own reflections. At the center of the main dining room, a Roman-themed atrium, rose a 30-foot-tall fountain encrusted in glass mosaic tiles and surmounted by a columned edifice. Docked alongside the fountain was an enormous replica of Cleopatra's barge that would put to shame the ersatz galley ships of modern nautical-themed restaurants.

Although the main dining room of Murray's Roman Gardens offered a more or less conventional French-influenced menu, the specials included such fanciful dishes as planked lamb à la Ramses II, Cleopatra's Needle salad, and deviled dolphin à la Dido (a porcelain dolphin stuffed with flambéed crabmeat, oysters, and lobster). Upstairs, in the private Dragon Room, diners sat at a banquet table where a miniature railroad circled a scale model of Peking's imperial gardens. It made stops along the way to deliver food to each place setting, anticipating by three-quarters of a century the gimmicky sushi boats of Japanese-American restaurants.

THE DINERS AT RECTOR'S WORE A LOT MORE JEWELRY THAN THEIR FIFTH AVENUE COUNTER-PARTS. THEY WERE LOUD, THEY TIPPED ON AN EPIC SCALE, AND THEY CAME FOR A SHOW

John Murray, after making a splash with his Roman Gardens, announced plans to transform the Hotel Saranac, at 42nd Street and Broadway, into a 5,000-seat restaurant: the largest in the world. The Café de l'Opéra, one of the great streaking comets in the Broadway night, opened in December 1909 at a reported cost of \$4 million, most of it spent on décor. Diners entering the Temple of Music, on the ground floor, reached the balconies overhead by ascending a black marble staircase that was more than 20 feet wide and guarded from top to bottom by bronze crouching Assyrian lions.

It was too good to last. Restrictions imposed on businesses during World War I, including earlier closing hours, drained much of the energy from the Great White Way, and Prohibition killed off every last one of the great lobster palaces. By the early 1920s, Times Square was the subject of sorrowful post-mortems. "In a street once famous for 'gilded' restaurants," *Collier's* magazine lamented in 1921, "you find today a swarm of middle-class eating places of moderate tariffs, flanked by dairy restaurants, pastry shops, rotisseries, cafeterias, and 'automats'."

The party was over, at least for a while.



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CELLAR

The Believers

The best sommeliers create wine lists with attitude

BY ALICE FEIRING

both the wine geek and the novice sipper. Maybe the bottles it features come from undersung regions or grapes. Maybe it forgoes big markups, making it easier to move beyond inexpensive standbys. Maybe it favors the lesser-known treasure over the trophy bottle or has a great selection of organic wines that powerfully convey the characteristics of grape and soil. Behind such lists are passionate wine enthusiasts like the six sommeliers and restaurateurs profiled below. These opinionated and pioneering voices in the industry continually expand my understanding of wine, always in a spirit of adventure and fun.

Lou Amdur (Owner, Lou, Hollywood, California) The list at Lou, a beloved Los Angeles wine bar, comes down, largely, to proprietor Lou Amdur's unambiguous criterion for choosing bottles: "I only pour wines I enjoy," he says. "I might have a customer who would like a buttery chardonnay, but I would feel cynical pouring it for him." Instead, he might suggest a white wine from Roussillon in southern France, which is lightly oaked but still possesses the full body that many chardonnay lovers seek out. Amdur is a seducer, not a proselytizer. When a customer wanders in and confidently professes a preference for "big" wines, Amdur finds a way to subvert that expectation: "I enjoy showing them something like Thierry Puzelat's La Tesnière, a 100 percent pineau d'aunis," he says, referring to a graceful French red that's almost as light in color as a rosé but packs plenty of red fruit and spice. No matter how ingrained your likes and dislikes, you're likely to walk out of Lou having had at least a small change of heart.

Kathy Bergin (Owner, 3 Doors Down Café, Portland, Oregon) "It pains me when I go out to dine and the champagnes are marked up three to four times," says Kathy Bergin, the owner of

Portland's 3 Doors Down Café. Bergin believes that good champagne is more a necessity than a luxury. With that in mind, she has priced her champagnes, and most of her wines, at a minimal markup; the exquisite Camille Savès Rosé, for example, costs \$70—about \$50 less than what you'd pay at most restaurants. "I really want people to drink them," she says. Certainly other restaurants offer modestly priced wines, but Bergin's list is special for other reasons too—not just for its selection of 15 champagnes but



also for such unexpected offerings as a 2007 Greek assyrtico and a 2005 trousseau from Jacques Puffeney. The combination of big choice and small price means that customers can afford to experiment, again and again.

Mark Ellenbogen (Wine Director, The Slanted Door, San Francisco, California) In 2003 the San Francisco Chronicle ran a story about Mark Ellenbogen and his thrilling wine list for the Slanted Door, chef Charles Phan's acclaimed Vietnamese restaurant (see page 94). Then, just a year later, California wine writer and vintner Jeff Morgan sent a letter to the editor to complain that Ellenbogen had refused to taste his wine unless it had less than 14 percent alcohol

and no oak and was made from grapes grown organically. Morgan's complaint is exactly why Ellenbogen is a superhero to me. He knows that high alcohol and oakiness would clash with the bright, clean flavors of the Slanted Door's food (and vice versa). Furthermore, he works closely with winemakers and encourages them to produce wine in a more natural way. In 2007, under guidance from Ellenbogen, who holds a degree in fermentation science from the University of California at Davis, Michael Dashe of Dashe Cellars in Oakland, California, made an organic zinfandel using native yeasts rather than the lab-cultured ones typically used for fermentation. Ellenbogen bought about half of Dashe's elegant L'Enfant Terrible for the Slanted Door, where it now holds its own next to refined Austrian rieslings and Loire Valley whites.

Paul Grieco (Wine Director/Owner, Insieme, Hearth, and Terroir, New York City) Paul Grieco first made a name for himself as an outspoken wine guy when he was the assistant general manager at New York's Gramercy Tavern (see page 74), but it wasn't until he left to open Hearth, Insieme, and Terroir that his gospel took on real power. Not only do his wine lists feature multiple vintages of wines he lovesmany of them obscure ones like Château Musar, a red from Lebanon, and Scholium Project sauvignon blanc from the Napa Valley-but his descriptions of those wines reflect a passion that invariably rubs off. Take this ode to the Alsatian wines of producer Jean-Michel Deiss: "When you first heard 'Kind of Blue' by Miles Davis, you knew that you were listening to something made in heaven. And when you taste the wines of Jean-Michel Deiss, you will be transported to another place, in another time, where man,

ALICE FEIRING is the author of The Battle for Wine and Love: Or, How I Saved the World from Parkerization (Harcourt, 2008).

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grape, Mother Earth, and Mother Nature came together to create something just as profound." Sure, it doesn't tell you anything specific about how the wines taste, but after I've read such a description, my senses stand up and take notice more fully when I take my first sip.

Roberto Paris (Wine Director, Il Buco, New York City) Sometimes building a wine list is a matter of native pride. Consider Roberto Paris and his beloved sagrantino di montefalco, an intense, tannic red from the Italian province of Umbria. Paris grew up there, and when he

O Sommeliers' favorite bottles under \$50 at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUEI19

became manager and sommelier at Il Buco, in 1997, the wine was virtually unknown in

the States. Only three were being imported, and Paris quickly got them on the list. Soon Il Buco became a destination for pilgrims seeking this mysterious varietal. A few years ago, after a visit to Umbria, I asked Paris whether he knew the rustic wines of a farmer of sagrantino named Ruggeri. He didn't, but within a couple of months Ruggeri's wines appeared at Il Buco (curiously, as they hadn't been imported to this country). Today Paris stocks an unrivaled selection of sagrantinos and other Italian varieties that are difficult

to find in the U.S., such as refosco, an earthy red from northern Italy, and teroldego rotaliano, a lively, deep red wine made in the northeastern region of Trentino.

Rajat Parr (Wine Director, Mina Group Restaurants) Many sommeliers are making their own wine these days. I know of few, however, who have embraced this sideline as zealously as Rajat Parr, the man behind the wine lists at the 15 restaurants owned by the Mina Group, including the flagship Michael Mina in San Francisco. "I got tired of hearing that balanced wine was impossible in California, because grapes get too ripe," he says. So. in 2005, he launched the label Parr Selections. He found that if he used fruit picked early in cooler parts of California and embraced old world techniques, he could make consistently balanced wines with lower alcohol. For example, Parr produced a syrah with 12.5 percent alcohol, and he made it without adding sulfur as a preservative. "I think the big style that people associate with California has little to do with the region," he says, "and everything to do with choice." Parr Selections wines are now available on Michael Mina's lists, along with an inspiring array of similarly nuanced wines from around the world.

How to Decant

Transferring wine from the bottle into a glass decanter not only improves flavor by promoting aeration; It also prevents sediment, common in older and unfiltered wines, from ending up in the glass. It's a simple technique, but there are a few tricks to doing it right. Here are the steps that master sommelier Robert Smith, of the Las Vegas restaurant Picasso, recommended to us. 1 Using a foil cutter or the blade on a waiter's corkscrew, remove the foil from around the bottle's neck; then pull the cork from the bottle with a corkscrew that provides ample stability, like a Screwpull (shown). (Note: Before opening, let the bottle stand upright for a few hours—up to a day for older wines—so that any sediment can move to the bottom.) 2 Wipe the mouth of the bottle inside and out with a moist napkin or cloth to remove any cork residue. 3 Prepare to decant the wine in a brightly lit place so that you'll be able to detect any sediment escaping from the bottle; Smith usually holds a lit candle to the neck of the bottle.

Slowly pour the wine into the decanter, checking for sediment. If any appears, stop pouring and let the bottle stand again for 15 to 30 minutes before continuing. Leave between a half ounce and an ounce in the bottle. - Jayanthi Daniel









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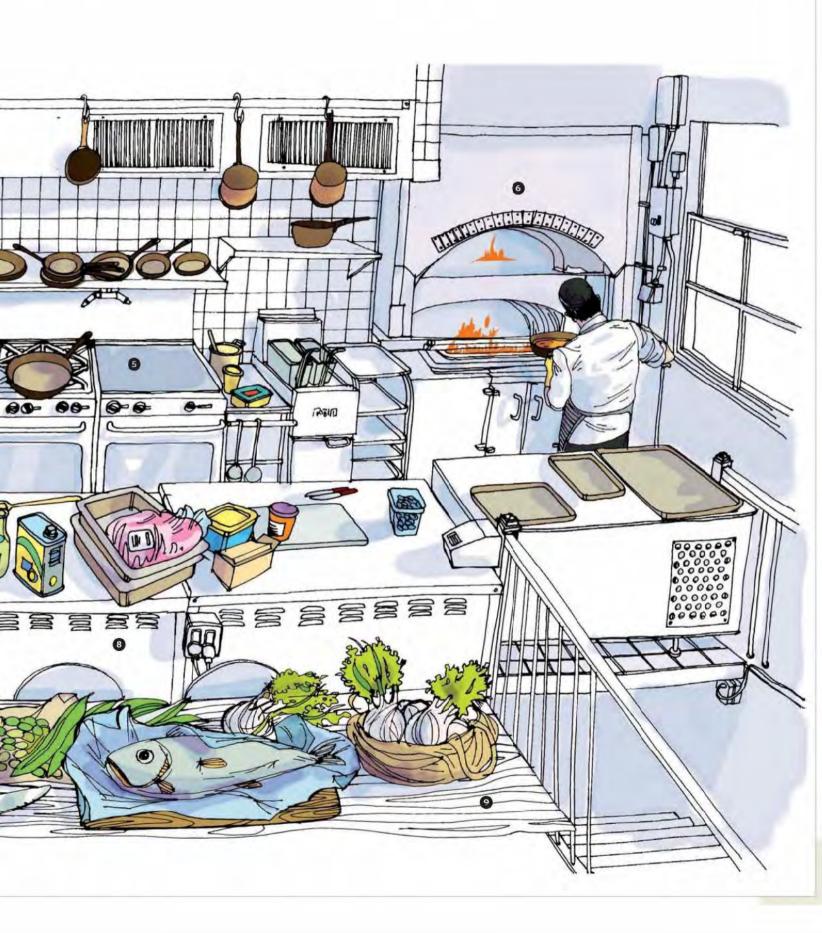
Inside a great restaurant kitchen

BY HUNTER LEWIS

OR MANY YEARS, fine-dining kitchens were based on the French "brigade" model, in which cooks are assigned to specific stations, one for the preparation of sauces, another for pastry, and so on. As menus have diversified, a more collaborative and less hierarchical design has evolved in many kitchens, but the same guiding principle-maximizing efficiency in order to cook quickly and consistently for large numbers of people—applies. Chefs have learned to stay true to that principle in all kinds of kitchens, whether it's a cramped galley or a sleek, custom-designed space. Pictured at right is an open kitchen-specifically, the one at the rustic Italian restaurant Barbuto, in Manhattan, where I cooked from 2005 to 2006. Barbuto's owner, the chef Jonathan Waxman, was seduced by this more flexible, economical design, in which the action is on display for diners, while working in California and then introduced it to many New Yorkers at his first Manhattan restaurant, Jams, in 1984. "The honesty of the open kitchen means you know where the food comes from," says Waxman, "and the creativity and work that went into it." Here's a guided tour.

Storage is at a premium, so plates and dry goods are stowed on versatile metro shelving 1. Cooking pasta in mesh baskets 2 instead of pots saves time. Skillets get hot fast because they're kept warm on a shelf 3 above the range. Professional gas burners 4 deliver intense heat for quick sautéeing. A huge cast-iron griddle, often called a plancha 6, stays hot continuously for perfect searing. Waxman's pride and joy are the grill and wood-burning oven 6, which turn out crisp chicken and gorgeously charred pizzas. A stainless-steel countertop 7 runs the length of the "line", where final food prep takes place and dishes are plated up; it sits atop a series of "low-boys" (small refrigerators) 8. The soul of Barbuto's kitchen is a salvaged oak table 9; by day, cooks might shuck fava beans here. By night, the table holds up to 14 diners, who have front-row seats to the show.







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MARY SHIVERS

REPORTER

Greener Giant

Can an emblem of industrialized food also stand for sustainability?

BY INDRANI SEN

A AVID FARMERS' MARKET SHOPPER and community gardener, I've always regarded Sysco, the country's largest food service distributor, with suspicion. So, I was surprised to hear that there were words of praise for the company at last August's Slow Food Nation sustainable food conference in San Francisco. During a panel discussion on eating local, the New York chef Dan Barber (see page 90) caused a stir by praising Sysco's environmental initiatives. "It's a great example of our voting with our forks to affect an enormously large company," Barber said, "that will do more for agriculture alone than any of us could do in three lifetimes."

As anyone who has worked in a restaurant knows, Sysco is a ubiquitous presence—an indispensable, if mostly unseen, contributor to the dining experience. The company's massive trucks deliver everything that a professional kitchen needs to operate, from soybean oil to fresh tomatoes and industrial-size rolls of cling wrap. Sysco's 400,000 customers include restaurants, hotels, cafeterias, and hospitals throughout North America. That's 40 percent of all the places where Americans and Canadians eat meals away from home. We all eat Sysco's food, and we eat it often, be it at Per Se, Wendy's, or the school cafeteria.



But if *local* and *small-scale* have been the watchwords of the sustainability movement, can a company that operates on a continental order of magnitude really claim a place in that movement? When I approached Barber later, his response was optimistic. "There is a mind change there," he said. "And there are some exciting possibilities on the horizon."

Sure enough, in October, Sysco unveiled a new logo, with a green leaf sprouting from the *y* in the company's name and a new tagline: "Good things come from Sysco". Paging through the company's 2008 "Sustainability Report", with its pictures of happy farmers, hybrid trucks, and verdant fields interpersed with statistics on things like emissions and energy use, I decided I needed to see for myself how Sysco's new, greener image plays out in practice.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, AT A 350,000-square-foot Sysco warehouse in Houston, Texas, I stood gazing at countless rows of metal racks stacked from the floor to the 40-foot ceiling with every imaginable food: cartons of saltine crackers; boxes of frozen pretzel dough; 30-pound plastic containers of low-fat cream cheese; big mesh sacks of cabbages, watermelons, and fingerling potatoes; pallets piled high with shrink-wrapped T-bone steaks; hundreds of cases of eggs; and more. It was as if I had crept into the larder of a family of ravenous giants.

"There's always this populist undercurrent that big is bad," Richard J. Schnieders, Sysco's chairman and CEO, had told me earlier that day in his glass-walled office in the heart of Sysco's certified-green corporate head-quarters. "But it's not small *or* big. We have to have both."

Schnieders, a handsome, silver-haired man of 60 who made \$12 million in salary and stock last year, is the son of a small-town Iowa grocer (whose store was "a little bigger than this office, but not much") and a self-professed foodie. Under his leadership, Sysco has invested in local food distribution systems, reduced chemical use on suppliers' land through integrated pest management, and revamped truck routing and packing strategies to achieve higher gas efficiency and take trucks off the road. In conversation, Schnieders's style is professorial; he drops references to the importance of reducing meat consumption to meet the planet's food needs and the proportionately higher costs of food in poor countries as compared with rich ones.

"You sound like Michael Pollan," I told him, referring to the journalist and author who has become a guru for the sustainability

"I think Michael is 90 percent right," Schnieders replied. What

INDRANI SEN's most recent article for SAVEUR was "Melting Pot" (March 2009).

REPORTER

about the other 10 percent? I asked,

"There's a bit of an elitist perspective there that he verbalizes," Schnieders said. "We have to produce safe, healthy, tasty foods for a wide population, not just for the folks that eat at Chez Panisse."

For his part, Pollan, whom I contacted after my visit with Schnieders, told me he thinks Sysco's sustainability initiatives are sincere. "Sysco is a highly decentralized company, making it especially hard to reform," he wrote, "but figuring out how huge institutions like this can profitably engage with small entities, like farmers or artisan food producers, is one of the key challenges we face, and Rick seems intent on solving it."

Schnieders, who will retire this year after 27 years with the company to pursue work in "sustainability and battling childhood hunger", makes the business arguments for change as eloquently as he does the moral ones. It's partly a matter of responding to customer demand, he told me. Chefs and diners are asking for local, sustainable, ethnic, and artisanal ingredients, and Sysco must tailor its inventory accordingly. The company now offers meats from grass-fed, antibiotic-free, and humanely raised animals; seasonal and organic produce; specialized product lines for Asian, Mexican, Italian, and vegetarian food; and the Chef Ex program, which allows chefs to order directly from specialized suppliers. It's no exaggeration to say that Sysco has changed the way restaurants source ingredients. A chef in Connecticut no longer has to drive to New York City every week to stock up on arugula and branzino. A steak house in Iowa can regularly feature Australian Wagyu beef rib eye.

But what about the food miles? I asked Schnieders. He responded with a story about eight cases of locally grown salad greens he encountered on a visit to upstate New York. "That organic farmer had put those eight cases in his pickup truck and driven 40 miles down, 40 miles back," Schnieders said. "The carbon footprint on a per-case basis or a per-pound basis is huge. So, we did a little analysis. We would deliver organic greens from California 1,700 cases at a time; if you measure the cost per case and the environmental footprint, it's actually less for those cases coming from California." Schnieders hastened to add that new truck routing and packing policies at Sysco cut 10 million miles driven in 2008, or the equivalent in carbon dioxide emissions of taking more than 3,000 cars off the road.

Gary Nabhan, one of the founders of Renewing America's Food Traditions, a coalition of food, agriculture, conservation, and educational organizations that advocates for sustainable practices, said he is impressed with Sysco's efforts. "If they see the value in cutting food miles and fuel costs, it behooves all the rest of us to get on board as well," he said.

JOHN BAUGH SAW WHICH WAY the wind was blowing back in 1969, when he joined his Houston-based frozen-food business with eight other companies to form a giant supplier named Sysco (an acronym for "Systems and Services Company"). Baugh, who died in 2007 at the age of 91, predicted America's shift to an eating-out culture and revolutionized the restaurant industry with his coast-to-coast trucking and distribution center network, which delivered the processed and frozen foods that the national chain restaurants began to demand. "Frozen foods taste better than anything I could grow in my garden," Baugh was known to proclaim. At its initial public offering, in 1970, Sysco had aggregate sales of \$115 million. In 2008 its sales total was \$37.5 billion.

Still, Schnieders sees dark clouds gathering for the food industry. Irrespective of food miles and carbon footprints, he said, nurturing and diversifying local agriculture systems is a practical necessity in this era of climate change and environmental degradation. He cited the example

of California's Salinas Valley, where most of the nation's salad greens are grown; groundwater salinity there is threatening productivity, and the valley's bounty may eventually dwindle. "Where are we going to go, when 60 to 70 percent of our produce comes from that valley?" Schnieders asked. "I think we need to be encouraging folks within local geographies to produce these products again."

That's where people like Dave Yandow come in. Yandow and his three brothers sold their 130-year-old Connecticut-based produce distribution company, the Fowler & Huntting Co., to Sysco in 2005 and still run it under the auspices of FreshPoint, Sysco's fresh-produce division, which includes 31 similar regional sub-companies nationwide. What Sysco got out of the deal were the know-how and the local connections that Yandow and his predecessors had spent more than a century establishing. Today, Fowler FreshPoint, as the brothers' operation is now called, distributes produce to restaurants, universities, hospitals, and supermarkets in an area that encompasses southern Vermont and New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and eastern New York State.

During the growing season, 30 to 40 percent of the company's produce comes form the Northeast. Even in December, when Yandow showed me around his warehouse in Hartford, he could point out cider

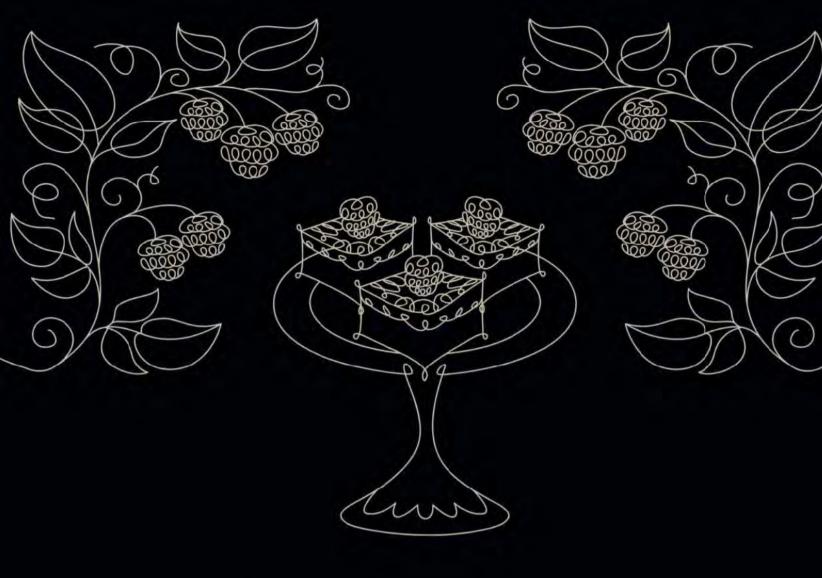
"MIDDLEMEN GET A BAD RAP SOMETIMES," YANDOW SAYS. "BUT THE HARDEST THING ABOUT BEING A FARMER IS NOT GROWING THE CROP. THE HARD-EST THING IS MARKETING AND SELLING IT"

from Harvard, Massachusetts; organic yukon gold potatoes from Woodland, Maine; and sugar pumpkins from Bloomfield, Connecticut. "Since 1865 this company has always sold locally grown," Yandow told me. "People look at it like these are brand-new ideas." These are old ideas."

For Yandow, as for Schnieders, helping farmers to observe sustainable practices means helping them to be sustainable economically. "We're able to allow smaller farms an opportunity to make a living, to expand their marketplaces beyond their normal reaches," he said. Yandow doesn't shy away from calling himself—and, by extension, Sysco—the middleman. Unlike Farm to Chef programs or farmer cooperatives, which connect chefs and retailers directly with local producers, Fowler FreshPoint buys produce from farmers and sells it at a profit. "I think middlemen get a bad rap sometimes," he told me. "But the hardest thing about being a farmer is not growing the crop. The hardest thing is marketing and selling it."

On MY LAST NIGHT IN HOUSTON, as I drove back toward my airport hotel, I spotted a roadside Wendy's and pulled over. This was research, I reasoned: the burger chain is one of Sysco's largest customers. Besides, I was hungry, and it was late. Almost automatically, I ordered a favorite childhood combination, a burger and a Frosty.

Squirting ketchup onto the square beef patty, I shuddered a bit at the memory of the mammoth ketchup cans and mountains of packaged beef I'd seen in the Sysco warehouse. Still, the soft bun, thin layer of meat, and briny pickle tasted like pure nostalgia. Sysco, I thought, you've been here all along. But if Sysco has shaped the way I eat, it occurred to me, my choices—"voting with my fork"—can also help reshape Sysco. As I devoured my burger, I was glad to know that I would have many other opportunities to cast my ballot.



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LIVES

Alice and Thomas

How two chefs came to represent the twin poles of American gastronomy

BY THOMAS MCNAMEE

Alice Waters and Chez Panisse: The Romantic, Impractical, Often Eccentric, Ultimately Brilliant Making of a Food Revolution (The Penguin Press). While I was writing this history of Waters and her legendary Berkeley, California, restaurant, one thing particularly intrigued me: that the Bay Area's only real rival to Chez Panisse, in terms of world fame, was the French Laundry, less than an hour's drive north, in the Napa Valley. Within the past decade, its chef, Thomas Keller, has also risen to the status of a culinary demigod, albeit one of a very different nature.

It struck me that these two larger-than-life figures have come to incarnate two starkly opposed, yet equally idealized, culinary archetypes in this country. Waters is the sensual Provençal earth mother carrying home from the farmers' market an overflowing basket of the season's bounty. Her cooking is rooted in the values of the French grand-mère—seasonality, local sources, intuitive but elegant techniques. Keller, on the other hand, floats into the imagination in immaculate whites. He's the cerebral, disciplined French-trained chef creating technically dazzling food that remains grounded in the classics of haute cuisine.

Waters embraced her calling in the 1970s, when the culinary aesthetic she championed was unknown to all but a handful of American diners. Keller's rise came with a later cultural shift, one that reflected a reverence for the chef as virtuoso. That their respective successes were realized in such proximity to each other is something more than a coincidence. California's Bay Area and the vineyard-covered hills just to the north of it were and still are a nexus of affluence and natural bounty that

THOMAS MCNAMEE's most recent story for SAVEUR was "Quintessential Californian" (August/September 2004).

is unparalleled in this country. What's more, that affluence coexists with an antiestablishment ethos that respects the self-taught rebel. The Bay Area proved to be the perfect milieu for both Waters and Keller. But there's more than geographic and cultural common ground connecting these two chefs. To glance back at their intersecting lives is to acknowledge our shared need for culinary heroes. And to have a meal at

Berkeley in the 1960s, she rode the waves of the zeitgeist—sex, drugs, radical politics. But by the winter of 1964–1965, with the specter of violence hanging over the Berkeley campus, Waters fled to France. There she fell in love with the stews, grilled meats, rustic tarts, and *la cuisine bourgeoise*—food that couldn't hide behind sauces or elaborate presentations.

In 1967 Waters earned a degree from Berke-





From left, the chef Alice Waters in a garden that supplies Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, California, circa 1980; the chef Thomas Keller, in the French Laundry's garden, 2003.

Chez Panisse and the French Laundry is to get a remarkably clear picture of who we are as diners at the beginning of the 21st century.

WATERS AND KELLER may represent American success stories, but France played a big role in both. Waters was raised in upper-middle-class suburbia, first in New Jersey and then in Southern California. As a student at the University of California at Santa Barbara and then at UC

ley in French cultural studies and then trained as a Montessori teacher. All the while, she was reading Elizabeth David and Richard Olney—kindred spirits in their love of simple French home cooking—and dreaming of starting a restaurant. Chez Panisse threw open its doors in August 1971; it was a modest, chaotic place, inexpensive and rough-hewn, furnished with flea market finds. Nobody wore a uniform. Waiters worked stoned out of their minds. But the food



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LIVES

was good, very good, and getting better fast. In 1975 Gourmet magazine gave Chez Panisse a rave review, and fame followed apace.

The timing could not have been better. In the early 1970s, fine dining in America was either dreary or expensive or both. At the other end of the spectrum, the postwar triumph of convenience had given us frozen and processed everything. The produce section of the supermarket was a chamber of abuse, stocked with poor-tasting fruits and vegetables hybridized for long shelf life. The turn toward local, organically raised foods that Waters initiated marked a welcome change, and it gave rise to a new era of dining inspired by the seasonal cooking of the European countryside. Chez Panisse was a beachhead, and though it took a while for restaurants and consumers in other parts of the country to join ranks, eventually many did, thanks in no small part to Waters's activism. Before anyone here knew about the slow food movement, which began in Italy in 1986, Alice Waters had embodied its values.

Keller's was a quieter ascent, accomplished more traditionally within the bounds of restaurant culture. He came of age in the 1970s and '80s, at a time when France, under the influence of the likes of Paul Bocuse and Michel Guérard, was undergoing its own culinary revolution. The nouvelle cuisine emanating from that country and taking root in New York and other American cities was lighter, fresher, and more inventive than classical French cooking.

The son of a marine, Keller was born in Oceanside, California, and moved around a lot as a kid; his mother managed restaurants, and he loved to hang around them. Keller started cooking at the age of 15, boiling crabs at the Bay and Surf Seafood Restaurant in Laurel, Maryland. He enrolled at Palm Beach Junior College in 1975 but didn't last long there; he wanted to cook. Keller's first mentor was a French chef named Roland Henin, who ran the Dunes Club in Narragansett, Rhode Island, where Keller worked one summer in 1977. "He ran a meticulous, calm, well-organized kitchen," Keller told me. "No yelling or screaming. That set the tone for me from then on."

After a series of ordinary cooking jobs, Keller was hired in 1981 as chef at the prestigious Raoul's in New York City, where he began to master the French classics. Like Waters, Keller had never spent a day at a cooking school. Also like Waters, he eventually went to France, in 1983, not to roam the countryside but to work

in some of that country's greatest restaurant kitchens. For a year and a half, he cooked at such Paris temples as Guy Savoy and Taillevent, and when he returned to New York, it was to assume the position of chef at the formidable and very formal La Réserve, a kitchen where hierarchy, formal rigor, and classical techniques were the rule. In 1987, in partnership with his old boss at Raoul's, Keller opened his own restaurant in New York, Rakel, It was a comparatively easygoing, friendly place, and the food, as I remember it from many visits there, was sensational; dishes, like a "cappuccino" of wild mushrooms and rare tuna in the style of steak au poivre, that foretold the discipline and inventiveness Keller would become famous for.

After a split with his partner at Rakel in 1991, Keller decamped to Southern California, where he cooked in a number of places. Some years earlier, while passing through the Napa Valley town of Yountville, he had come across a restaurant located in a 19th-century stone building that had once housed a steam laundry. He began to dream of building a restaurant there that would rival the greatest three-stars of France. Finally, in 1992, the place was for sale. It was the perfect moment for Keller to end his peregrinations and—on California soil, using California ingredients, in the wake of Waters's revolution—realize his long-held dream.

THE FRENCH LAUNDRY is a serene and beautiful place. There are just 16 tables, twice as many servers, and flowers everywhere you look. There's no clanging, no hollering, no belly laughter. The kitchen is quiet, spotless, and spare; a flat-screen monitor broadcasts a live feed from cameras installed in the kitchen of Keller's Per Se, which opened in New York City in 2004. (Keller divides his time between Yountville and Manhattan.) The 35 people who make up the kitchen staff are assigned traditional French toles, from the sous-chefs down to the commis. Keller is addressed invariably as "chef".

On my most recent visit, my wife and I were served a menu of 17 courses, most of them small enough for two bites, each with its own wine pairing. The combinations were brilliant: a "celery branch salad" mingled said humble vegetable with chestnuts, black truffles, and a few tiny, batter-fried balls of banana; at the bottom of the dish was a little schmear of Skippy peanut butter. Like everything we ate during that meal, it was complex and classical, with a burst of whimsy. When the check came, we weren't stuffed, and we weren't drunk. The sensation

was more like museum fatigue, an overdose of masterpieces.

At Chez Panisse, everybody calls the boss Alice. The kitchen is characterized by freewheeling collaboration. At a chefs' meeting I sat in on last December, the head chef, Jean-Pierre Moullé—he shares that title with David Tanis, who runs the kitchen for half the year—was technically in charge, but he was hardly giving orders. "Who wants to do the risotto?" he asked. Two cooks eagerly volunteered. "You help each other, then. Just watch the salt, okay? The pancetta has a lot in it already."

Dining at Chez Panisse is more conventional. The dishes look lovely. The food is delicious. When my wife and I ate there last winter, each course was a portrait of the season: risotto with winter squash and chestnuts; pork shoulder braised in riesling with juniper berries, savoy cabbage, and apples. There was no architecture, no ironic flourish. Everything was perfect, from the bread that started the meal to the exquisite tangerines delivered to our table at the end.

THOSE TWO MEMORABLE meals, eaten within a week of each other, captured for me the split personality of the modern-day American restaurant-goer. We crave complexity and technical perfectionism, but sometimes we just want to eat a damn good tangerine. When I got in touch with Waters and Keller after dining at their restaurants, both of them seemed perfectly aware of the duality they represent.

"I took Fanny [her daughter] to the French Laundry for her birthday," Waters said. "Five hours, uninterrupted. We were on a cloud the whole time. The service, the atmosphere, your every little desire indulged. You're the center of the universe."

"I love Chez Panisse," said Keller. "I love Alice's whole philosophy."

Waters: "I never saw anybody cut up a chicken as beautifully as Thomas. He took the wishbone out! I'd never done that; now I always do."

Keller: "We're always cognizant of our environmental effects. Chez Panisse was one of the forerunners of that idea."

Waters: "My way has always been a sort of bumbling trial and error."

Keller: "What we're about is excellence of ingredients and quality of execution."

Ultimately, the chefs said it themselves the best: the natural and the man-made, the wild and the cultivated, the sensual and the cerebral—neither could exist without the other. Together, they make dining in America whole.

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MEMORIES

Dream Job

A former food critic considers the occupational hazards of being a hired mouth

BY BRYAN MILLER

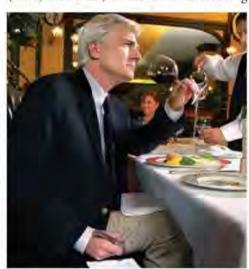
In MY CAPACITY as a restaurant critic for the New York Times from 1984 to 1993, I dined out—and I'm not making this up—more than 4,800 times, give or take the occasional street vendor hot dog. As a hungry young journalist living in New York City, I couldn't have timed things better. The American food revolution had recently broken out, and I was on the scene as it evolved into the most magnificent restaurant renaissance the metropolis has ever experienced, spurred on by dozens of creative, Europe-trained American chefs and millions of adventuresome diners. Even the blasé French tipped their hats.

It seemed to me then that everyone wanted to be a restaurant critic—everyone except me. Don't get me wrong; I loved eating out and observing a dining room's nightly ballet. But you don't have to be a professional eater to do that. As I would learn, being a restaurant reviewer is not a prolonged Dionysian romp. There are downsides no one talks about.

Like many critics, I fell into the job. It was 1983, and I had been working as a food reporter for the Times when I was offered the position after the departure of the estimable Mimi Sheraton. I was shocked. I'd been at the paper all of nine months; I hardly knew my way around the cafeteria, let alone the most diverse dining city in the world. Sure, I had a few credentials: I'd worked in the kitchen of an excellent French restaurant in Connecticut, and I'd been a reviewer for the Hartford Courant. But Hartford was no New York. The thought of critiquing some of the most high-profile chefs in the world at the callow age of 31 scared the hell out of me. When I declined the offer, my colleagues thought I was deranged.

A year later, I was summoned to the office of the paper's formidable assistant managing editor, Arthur Gelb. "This time I'm not asking you, I'm telling you," he said. I was presented with an American Express card bearing a phony name, Michael Simon. The subterfuge was effective for about six days. A week into my stint, I spotted my alias scrawled on a piece of paper taped to a maître d' stand.

At the time, there were no books on the subject of restaurant reviewing; no courses where you could learn the rules and ethics of the job. So, I quizzed my predecessors for details, from how many restaurant visits one should make (three, minimum) to the art of note taking



The author, retired from reviewing, posing for a publicity photo at Brasserie LCB in 2006.

(do it in the bathroom), and I embarked on a regimen of gustatory exercises—push-ups for the palate, you might call them. A few times a month, I'd place pinches of different herbs and spices on my tongue and try to identify them. I bombed at first, but before long I could tease out most of the ingredients in a dish. (My one failing: dried turmeric. To this day, I wouldn't know the spice if you rolled my pillow in it.)

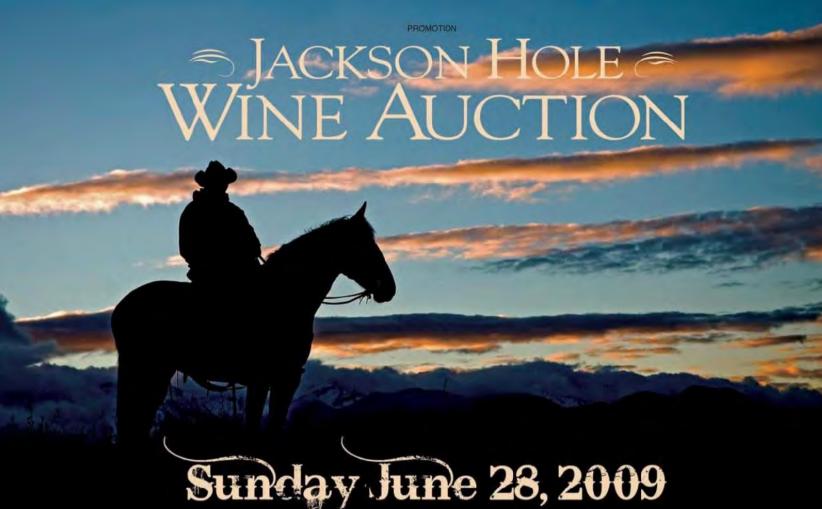
I ended up loving the job, though it came with some unusual challenges. For one thing, I was petrified of screwing up the facts. If I wrote, say, that there were Bac-Os in a salad that didn't contain them, not only was my reputation called into question, but the newspaper could count on hearing from lawyers. Then there were the bad restaurants. Oh, there were many bad restaurants. But the job's most unexpected disadvantage was the toll it took on my previously rich culinary life. In more than nine years, I never turned on my stove, nor was I invited to a dinner party. Friends were too nervous to cook for me.

I was reminded of some of the weightier aspects of restaurant reviewing while watching the presidential inauguration last January. I wondered whether Barack Obama knew what he was in for: the isolation, the inability to have casual business relationships, the burden of power. I didn't want to shut restaurants down; I only wanted restaurants to get better. And yet, for a while, I had bodyguards traipsing along behind me, the result of repeated—and most likely bogus—threats on my life.

It's not that I'm comparing the role of the restaurant reviewer to that of the president; I merely mean to suggest that it's a job for which one can't fully prepare. The most valuable counsel came just a week into my tenure and was proffered by Craig Claiborne, the paper's vaunted food writer and first restaurant critic. I invited the shy and taciturn Claiborne to lunch at Le Chantilly, a swanky French place in midtown, in order to pick his brain, but he dodged every single one of my questions throughout the meal. Exasperated, I finally came right out and asked for his advice.

He fiddled with his tie, gazed at the tablecloth, and let out a sigh. "It's a hard job," he said finally.

BRYAN MILLER's most recent article for SAVEUR was "Still Sterling at 25" (August/Sepiember 2007).



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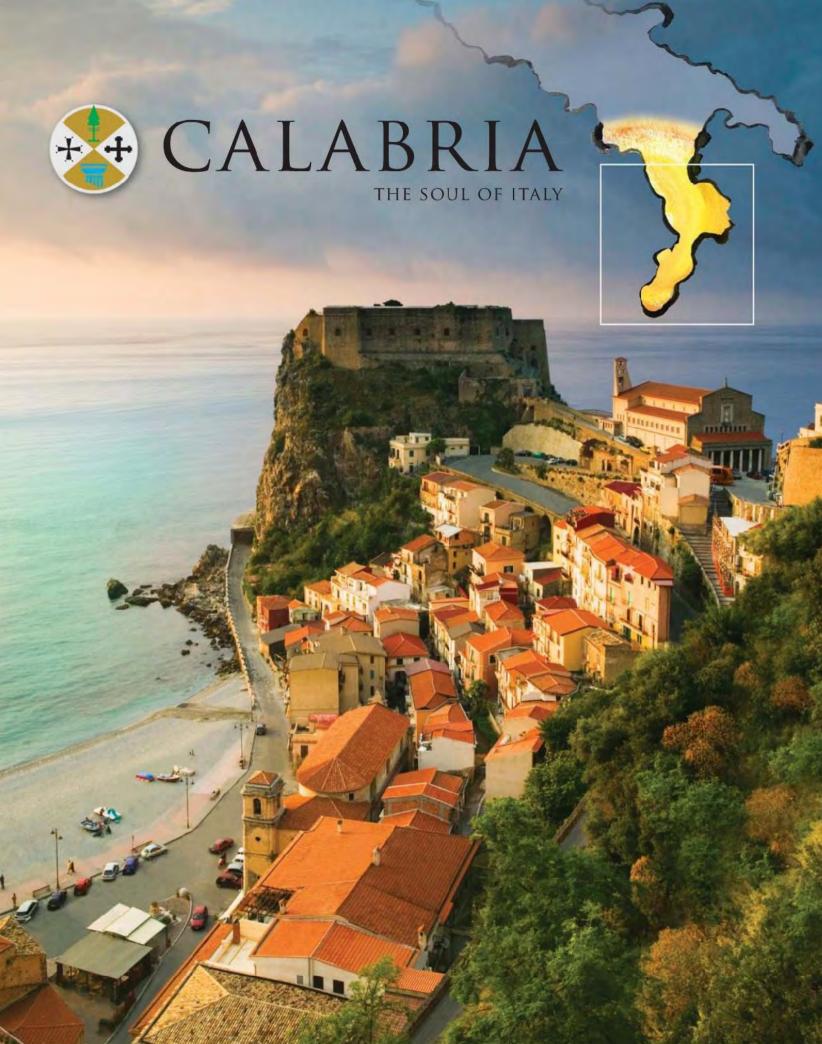
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us than others? For one thing, they have profoundly influenced the way we think about food. Just as important, though, they delight us, dazzle us, and comfort us in ways that make us feel both at home and utterly transported. Some of our favorites—listed in no particular order on the following pages—are enduring landmarks, like Commander's Palace in New Orleans, that reconnect us with the spirit of an earlier golden age of dining. Others are pioneers, like Blue Hill at Stone Barns in upstate New York, that take us closer to our food's roots and show us just how much more delicious locally grown ingredients can taste. Still others accomplish a thoughtful translation of an indigenous cuisine, as does Charles Phan's Vietnamese-inspired fare at the Slanted Door in San Francisco. And then there are the restaurants, like the French master chef Joël Robuchon's Las Vegas temple of haute dining, that transcend place altogether, immersing us in a total sensory fantasy. Whatever our tastes and cravings, we are grateful to these restaurants for enriching our lives and for making dining in America more rewarding than ever. —The Editors

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Nº1Joël Robuchon

Amid a desert city's illusions, a promise of fantasy fulfilled

URING OUR TRAVELS AROUND the world as food writers, we've splurged on meals at a lot of highend restaurants that pledge to transport diners to a higher plane of luxury and gastronomic bliss, but we've never seen that promise fulfilled quite as it is at Joël Robuchon in Las Vegas. That establishment—the acclaimed chef's first haute French restaurant on American soil and his most extravagant anywhere—rattles our jaded expectations with a fantasy experience on every level.

We find it fascinating that 13 years after Robuchon parted ways with haute French cuisine to focus on his less formal L'Atelier locations, he has returned to show-case his fluency in the highest culinary art in America's showiest city. While other chefs open mere satellites of their popular restaurants here, Robuchon seems to have discovered his id among the craps tables and floor shows of this shimmering capital of escapism. Here, in a roughly 700-square-foot restaurant within earshot of the MGM Grand's clanging slot machines, the most august French culinary traditions, the ones on which Robuchon built his reputation at the now closed restaurant Jamin in Paris,

Right, from top, purple wax flowers; executive chef Claude Le-Tohic. Facing page, a shellfish course includes (clockwise from top right) sea urchin with fennel broth; lemongrass roasted lobster with semolina; truffle-langoustine ravioli with chopped cabbage. Following pages, the restaurant's dining room. marry with an artful Japanese aesthetic and cutting-edge technology. It's a jewel box of a space, with purple velour seat cushions, crystal chandeliers, Christofle silver, and, in a nod to its surroundings, framed photos of David Copperfield, Lionel Richie, and other popular Vegas acts.

Perhaps it's the Vegas effect that has upped the ante for Robuchon to such an extreme. The chef, who transported top talent from his restaurants around the world-including his French executive chef, Claude Le-Tohic—conceives and approves every last detail, from the designs of the dishes to the color of the Staub mini cocottes that are used for sauces and vegetables. The meal begins, in true French style, with bread-in this case, more than a dozen different kinds, all arranged artfully on a three-tiered glass-and-silver cart: baguettes, brioches, focaccias, and rolls flavored with cheese, nuts, herbs, and bacon. Next comes the first course: on our last visit it was a finely diced apple in a light gelée flavored with nutmeg and olive oil. The rest of the meal is a cascade of indulgences: slices of potato topped with a "carpaccio" of foie gras and generous shavings of black Périgord truffle; a starkly simple Kobe beef rib eye cooked on a bed of rock salt to supple perfection; the chef's famous whipped potatoes enriched with a surfeit of butter and cream (see page 102 for a recipe); and on and on. The meal costs a king's ransom (starting at \$500 per person), but hey, this is Vegas. - Cheryl and Bill Jamison, authors of Around the World in 80 Dinners (William Morrow, 2008)





HERE, THE MOST AUGUST TRADI-TIONS OF FRENCH HAUTE CUISINE ARE ENSHRINED IN AMERICA'S SHIMMERING CAPITAL OF ESCAPISM





RESTAURANTS THAT MATTER

Joël Robuchon's five-spice pan-fried sea bass with verjus sauce. Facing page, individual baguettes are among the scores of artisanal breads offered at the beginning of the meal.



RESTAURANTS THAT MATTER



In Boston, a hometown hero gets back to basics

THE CHEF AND RESTAURATEUR Barbara Lynch is Boston's cross between Martha Stewart and Robert Moses. She's a cook with superb taste, both gustatory and visual. She's also an urban visionary with working-class roots who is always looking around the next corner, usually one with a lot of demolition crews blocking the view. Since she opened her impeccable No. 9 Park on Beacon Hill, in 1998, Lynch, a native of Irish South Boston (think *The Departed*), has built a culinary empire of more than seven restaurants and gourmet shops. Her latest venture is a sleekly designed Italian lunch counter called Sportello. It's a tribute to Brigham's, the ur-Boston ice cream parlor and luncheonette where as a teenager she flipped burgers and first thought, Hey, I can do this.

Lynch trained with seasoned chefs in Boston and then broadened her horizons in Italy, where she left a big part of her heart but gained a culinary identity and design sense to add to her own, Boston-bred aesthetic. Sportello focuses laserlike on what made Lynch a phenomenon and an inspiration, namely, pastas of a delicacy and subtlety of flavor that no Irish girl has any business knowing how to make: pillowy, creamy potato gnocchi with peas and mushrooms that define spring (see page 100 for a recipe); strozzapreti with braised rabbit, an ingredient she has long championed; ricotta ravioli with nutmeg, brown butter, and parmigiano-reggiano. End with the homemade tiramisù; for all her hard-won expertise, Lynch hasn't lost her Bostonian sweet tooth or the loyalty to her roots that has allowed her to remain a local hero while she's made herself a national star. — Corby Kummer, senior editor at The Atlantic and author of The Pleasures of Slow Food (Chronicle, 2008)

Truffled gnocchi with peas and chanterelles (see page 100 for a recipe), above. Facing page, the Boston restaurateur Barbara Lynch, at Sportello.

RESTAURANTS THAT MATTER







The Neighborhood Thai

The dishes keep on coming: deep-fried morning glory blossoms with raw shrimp and cilantro: pork belly with sator beans and branches of green peppercorns; lamb curry with chunks of kabocha squash topped with fried basil. And on it goes at Jitlada, my local Thai restaurant in Los Angeles, There I can also find the chicken sates and pad thais that are the staples of Thal spots all around



the United States, but there are also, at last count, 126 dishes from southern Thailand. The owner emigrated from there to the U.S. in 1979, at a time when the first Thai restaurants were enchanting Los Angeles diners. Now their legacy has seemingly spread to every urban block and main street in the country, Here in LA, the face of the neighborhood Thai restaurant is changing, reflecting a turn toward regional cooking. Fortunately for the rest of the country, where LA goes the nation follows, or so we Angelenos like to think -Leslie Brenner

HERE'S NO PLACE I'D RATHER be on a Sunday morning than on the patio at Commander's Palace in New Orleans, with a milk punch in hand and a plate of eggs sardou on the way. On crisp spring days, when the light shines silver and the wind rustles the leaves of the Garden District's old oak trees, it seems everyone is drawn to this turquoise-and-white Victorian mansion that sits like a giant confection across the street from the Lafayette Cemetery: the locals and the tourists, the lunching ladies fresh from church and the politicians passing through town. A brass band ambles from room to room, maneuvering between servers pouring chicory-scented coffee. Silverware clanks, conversation bubbles forth. In the fover, Ella Brennan, the matriarch of the family that has run this restaurant for the past 40 years, is holding court and telling stories. Her niece, Lally, escorts guests to the bar-which happens to be located in the kitchen, just feet from the stoves—for a round of sazeracs.

No one does restaurants like the Brennans. And no res taurant in that family's expanding empire, which includes a dozen or so bistros, steak houses, and cafés in New Orleans and other cities across the South, is a more exuberant example of the manifold glories of dining in the Crescent City than Commander's Palace. It is formal, but good fun; it is huge, but each of the seven dining rooms feels like a restaurant in itself: the intimate Garden Room overlooking a leafy courtyard, the breezy Patio Room, or the main dining room, with its twinkling chandeliers and the bustling energy of a grand Parisian brasserie. The fare is traditional—a marriage of elegant, European-inflected Creole dishes with more rustic Cajun ones-with just enough whimsy to keep it interesting. Though Commander's has never played into the cult of the chef, it has launched the careers of some of America's first celebrity cooks, including Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse. And the service manages to be both pampering and down-to-earth. Like the city that gave it life, the restaurant's strength lies in its graceful ability to reconcile—and, indeed, revel in-its inherent contrasts and contradictions.

The Brennan dynasty began in 1946, when Miss Ella's brother, Owen Jr., and father, Owen Sr., opened a restaurant in the French Quarter called the Vieux Carré. Ten years and a few new locations later, the family opened Brennan's, which distinguished itself from other, more formal temples of New Orleans gastronomy, like Antoine's and Galatoire's, by channeling the city's joie de vivre into a sophisticated dining experience. Brennan's became famous for its festive brunch, and its servers made showy fun of flaming tableside desserts like bananas foster, a dish Miss Ella invented on the fly one night for a regular customer. In 1969 Miss Ella and her siblings Dick, John, Adelaide, and Dottie bought Commander's, which had been a restaurant since 1880, and turned it into one of the best places to eat in the country.

I've been on the receiving end of Commander's Palace's charms over the years, but I've also seen it from another perspective; for almost a year when I was in my early 20s, I worked in the front of the house. Like most new members of the staff, I started at the bottom—in my case, ferrying trays

of food from the labyrinthine kitchen to holding stations in the dining rooms. It was a smart way to start, allowing me to get the hang of the choreography of the service while also introducing me to the workings of the kitchen, which was presided over by a towering, ponytailed man named Jamie Shannon, who had recently stepped into Lagasse's shoes. Never had I seen such from-scratch cooking: the air in the kitchen hung heavy with the aroma of file (the powder made of sassafras that thickens and flavors gumbo) and tasso (the Louisiana-style spiced ham, which the cooks cured in-house); huge drums of veal and fish stock simmered throughout the day. Even the worcestershire sauce was homemade.

I worked in the Garden Room, and from the corner table, I could see the path that led to the house Miss Ella shared with her sister Dottie. My wait captain was a fellow named

NO ONE DOES RESTAURANTS LIKE THE BRENNANS, AND NO RESTAURANT IS A MORE EXUBERANT EXAMPLE OF THE GLORIES OF NEW ORLEANS DINING THAN COMMANDER'S PALACE

Des who called me "heart" and had worked at Commander's long enough to have a mental catalogue of regular customers' requests and tics. To this day, I have never met his equal: whether he was spinning a yarn (and he had some good ones) or pouring whiskey cream sauce into a bread pudding soufflé with a dramatic flourish, Des lived and breathed the style of service that the Brennans painstakingly cultivated. "It's all about the lagniappe," Dickie, Dick Brennan's son, used to say, referring to the Greole word for an unexpected gift. Dickie was a manager at Commander's; now he has three restaurants of his own.

Some things have changed since the days I worked at Commander's Palace. In the mid-1990s Miss Ella's daughter, Ti Adelaide Martin, became a co-proprietor with Lally Bren-

nan. Jamie Shannon, who had gone far to champion what has become known as haute Creole cooking, passed away in 2001.

More photographs of Commander's Palace at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE119

And Hurricane Katrina shuttered the restaurant for a year. When I dined there a few months after it reopened, I was touched by how beautifully it had endured and evolved. All the classics, like redfish lyonnaise and succotash-like maque choux (see page 97 for a recipe), were as impeccably prepared as ever, and the new dishes from chef Tory McPhail, who rose up through Shannon's ranks, were welcome additions: lusty, local fare like oysters in absinthe cream under a pastry dome. Ti Adelaide, a redhead in a leopard-print shirt, worked the room with practiced grace. She and I hadn't met, but when I introduced myself as a former employee, she insisted I join her at the bar to try the digestifs the chef had infused with muscadine grapes and other seasonal ingredients. It was the perfect lagniappe. —Dana Bowen

Maque choux and shrimp, facing page (see page 97 for a recipe). Previous pages, the cooks of Commander's Palace convene in the restaurant's garden.





Nº4Topolobampo

The beauty is in the details at Chicago's high temple of Mexican cuisine



7:15 A.M. Prep cook Jose Juan Hernandez checks a duty roster. 8:15 A.M. The restaurant takes delivery of a suckling pig. 9:05 A.M. Line cook Jésus Ruiz (far right) heads for the line. 9:15 A.M. Chef Rick Bayless (facing page, center) meets with chef de cuisine Brian Enyart (left) and master gardener Bill Shores.

THE TEMPERATURE IN DOWNTOWN Chicago is eight degrees at 7:15 A.M., when the first of Topolobampo's prep staff show up for work on a mid-December morning. By 8:15, production cook Enrique Gomez has begun making queso fresco and simmering tomatillos for salsa. A tortilla maker named Maria Garcia has finished kneading 50 pounds of fresh corn masa in a huge Berkel standing mixer, and purchasing manager Hector Cotorra has taken delivery of six pallets of fresh pea shoots, ten pounds of beef tenderloin, and an entire frozen suckling pig. Less than an hour after the first flick of a light switch, the kitchen has gone from cold and dark to alive and kicking, and no one has barked an order or even broken into a trot.

Calm is the order of the day at Rick Bayless's landmark restaurant in Chicago's River North neighborhood. When Topolobampo opened next door to Bayless's less formal Frontera Grill, in 1989, the notion of a serious, upscale Mexican eatery was a novelty. Since then, Oklahoma-born Bayless has done more than any other chef to recast and elevate the collective American image of the food of Mexico, bringing an academic fervor to the interpretation of its pre- and post-colonial regional cuisines. To understand how Topolobampo became what is arguably the finest *alta cocina Mexicana* restaurant in the country, it helps to witness the obsession with detail and planning that governs a typical day there.

After donning his chef's whites at 8:45, Bayless, a wiry and boyish 55-year-old, pays a quick visit to the kitchen and then heads upstairs to meet with Brian Enyart, his 31-year-old chef de cuisine, and Bill Shores, who coordinates the procurement of produce. The trio sit down at a table surrounded by bookshelves and launch into an intricate discussion of chiles. "The mirasol and árbol could be replaced," Bayless says. "They're just not tasting distinctive enough."

"But we've got to have some small chiles," Enyart says.

WHEN THE RESTAURANT OPENED, IN 1989, THE NOTION OF A SERIOUS, UPSCALE MEXICAN EATERY WAS A NOVELTY

THE NEW-MENU
TASTING IS A
DRESS REHEARSAL
THAT TESTS THE
COOKS' ABILITY
TO INTERPRET
BAYLESS'S VISION
AND A CRASH
COURSE FOR THE
SERVERS

"Well, let's replace the mirasols with serranos for now," Bayless concludes.

Then on to tomatoes. "I'd like something darker, like brandywines," says Enyart.

Then herbs. "We need some moisture-loving ones," says Shores. Bayless suggests verbena. Shores places a small potted plant on the table. "I wanted you to try this mojito mint." Bayless and Enyart each pluck a leaf and chew it. They look at each other with a noncommittal shrug.

"What about apple mint?" Enyart suggests.

"Or grapefruit mint?" says Bayless.

"Or lemon mint," Enyart counters. And so it goes.

NOTHING EXEMPLIFIES BETTER the air of meticulousness that pervades Topolobampo than what happens each morning on the line: a ten-foot-long gantlet of ovens, burners, garnish trays, mini-fridges, and prep surfaces, partially concealed from the dining room by a shoulder height counter. At 11:15, just before lunch service begins, Bayless steps into the line's cramped, rubber-floored gangway, plucks a spoon from a pocket sewn into his sleeve, and, moving swiftly and methodically, tastes first the warm moles, then the cold

who will have to wax eloquent on each course. First up is an ensalada de noche buena: a spare composition of cubed housecured salmon, agave-braised beets, jicama, and microgreens from Bayless's own garden. When the dish gets a thumbs-up from Bayless, more plates are rushed to the bar for a dozen or so black-clad servers to taste. The group is being coached by sommelier Jill Gubesch on how to pronounce Maximin Grünhauser Riesling Kabinett Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, the wine she's recommending for pairing with that salad. Next up are uchepos gratinados (sweet corn tamales baked with chilaca chile cream and topped with wild chanterelles), atún sellado con bacalao (pan-roasted tuna with slow-simmered cod), and pavo en mole negro (skillet-seared free-range turkey breast in a 29-ingredient Oaxacan black mole). All of them get the okay from Bayless and Enyart, with a caveat or two. "I'm a little worried about how long it's going to take you to put that salad together," Bayless says to a young cook named Megan O'Connor, who assures him she won't fall behind.

THE SNOW IS STILL COMING down strong at 5:45, when the first dinner parties straggle in. Topolobampo's longtime manager, an impeccably dressed man named Larry Butcher,



11:15 A.M. Bayless does the prelunch tasting on the line. 12:45 P.M. Enyart oversees the plating of dishes during the lunch service; in the foreground: a salad of greens and chicharron. 10:10 P.M. Evening sous-chef Andres Padilla heads to the basement lockers at the end of his shift.

salsas, then the condiments. He samples the Oaxacan-style cows' milk cheese and turns to Enyart. "The texture's a bit off," Bayless says. "We should probably grate this by hand until we can start making our own next year."

By one o'clock, heavy snow is falling outside. The dining room is full yet serene. On the line, Enyart plates up achiotemarinated wild striped bass while lead line cook Jésus Ruiz tends to four sputtering skillets at once, searing squares of pork loin (for the puerco en mole negro; see page 98 for a recipe) and shell-on fresh Gulf shrimp (for the camarones a la yucateco). By the time the last lunch customers leave, at 2:45, almost a half foot of snow has accumulated and the phone starts ringing with dinner cancellations.

Around three o'clock, Bayless and Enyart convene with the evening line cooks to sample a new tasting menu that's debuting tonight—a dress rehearsal that will test the cooks' ability to interpret Bayless's vision and a crash course for the servers

peers out the front window, then at the reservations book. "Tve never seen it this bad," he mutters. On the line, predinner-rush jitters give way to letdown at the prospect of a bust evening. And yet, by 7:30, virtually all the tables have filled. The saving grace: reservationless regulars who live within trudging distance and have learned to appreciate the upside of a Great Lakes blizzard.

The new tasting menu is proving popular; the cooks, freshly energized, turn out plate after perfectly composed plate. Around nine o'clock, Bayless, who has been hovering near the line, sits down to dinner at Frontera Grill. Topolobampo's last order comes through at 9:45, but no one seems ready to venture back outside. Finally, at 11:15, the last customers, a group of 30-somethings in smart business attire, bundle themselves into a cab, which fishtails away down a frozen, deserted Clark Street. The snow has finally stopped. —David McAninch





Nº6Gramercy Tavern

A Manhattan restaurant changed big-city dining forever

Y BRAIN IS A SIEVE WHEN it comes to the details of meals gone by. If I didn't write it down or eat it 12 times, it vanishes into the ether. But I still recall everything about my first visit to New York's Gramercy Tayern, a few months after it opened, in 1994. I remember being greeted by a young woman who appeared to be having a very good day. She walked my wife and me jauntily through the busy, mural-wrapped bar she called "the tavern", where there seemed to be a lot more eating than imbibing going on; past an expansive but homey main dining area accented by copper wall sconces and early-20thcentury antiques; and, finally, into a quiet, comfortable back room. She talked knowingly and enthusiastically about the menu, and she went out of her way to make sure nothing was amiss without, somehow, ever seeming to go out of her way.

The food was American and French and Italian all at once—all the best parts of those cuisines, without too many fancy flourishes. I had a braised lamb shank that was akin to something my mom might have made in her rural New Jersey kitchen, only better. It was served with perfectly caramelized roasted root vegetables and pommes anna. I'd made the latter dish many times at home; it's lit-

Above right, from top, a decorative element in Gramercy Tavern's dining room; smoked trout filets. Facing page, owner and founder Danny Meyer.

tle more than sliced potatoes coated in butter and seasoned with salt and pepper before being baked until golden and bubbly. This version was so good—evincing some mysterious added touch—that I never made mine again.

At first, critics didn't know what to make of the place. Was Gramercy Tavern—opened by Danny Meyer, whose casual Union Square Cafe, a few blocks south, had introduced the city to the restaurateur's idea of "enlightened hospitality"—the new face of fine dining or just another culinary version of business casual? Was the tavern for drinking or was it for eating? Were they to call the menu haute American? Rustic regional French? By the time our desserts arrived at the end of that first visit, I didn't care. I knew that the restaurant set a new benchmark for dining in New York City, and beyond.

The chef was a then unknown cook named Tom Colicchio, who has moved on to achieve his own set of benchmarks, in New York, on television, and elsewhere. In 2006 Michael Anthony took up the reins and—by improving on a solid theme with new dishes like his outstanding pan-roasted chicken with a sweetly nutty madeira sauce (see page 98 for a recipe) and trout filets smoked to order over applewood and served with a cipolline onion purée and pickled-onion vinaigrette—has made Gramercy Tavern feel as vital and new as it did when it first opened. In a city as fickle as New York, that's saying something. —Bryan Miller, former restaurant critic for the New York Times





THE CRITICS
DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT TO MAKE
OF GRAMERCY
TAVERN. WAS IT
FINE DINING OR
A CULINARY VERSION OF BUSINESS
CASUAL?









Nº7Manresa

At a hidden gem on California's Central Coast, food is art

Citrus and jasmine tea jelly, above. Facing page, Monterey Bay spot prawns and garden vegetables with spices.

AMERICAN CLASSICS The Red Sauce Joint

Neil Simon wrote. "There are two Laws in the universe: The Law of Gravity, and Everybody likes Italian food." By which I presume he meant Italian-American food, the kind southern Italian immigrants introduced to New York and other cities a century ago by grafting their own food traditions onto American abundance. The result was a tomato-rich, mozzarella-lavished



cuisine all its own. Nowhere, in my opinion, is that tradition more faithfully maintained than at Patsy's, on New York City's West Side. You like tripe? Patsy's makes it hearty, with onions, prosciutto, peas, and tomatoes. You want veal francese? You get three flavorful filets lightly battered and sautéed in olive oil and white wine. And the eggplant parmigiana? It's a masterly layering of sweet eggplant, cheese, and tomato, If Frank Sinatra had ever hosted a TV talk show in the 1950s, he would have done it sitting at Patsy's. -John Mariani



VERYTHING AT MANRESA, David Kinch's restaurant in the small town of Los Gatos, 50 miles south of San Francisco, is luminous, thoughtful, and sensual. The air is perfumed by the herb plants and citrus trees on the patio outside. California sun filters into the dining room through translucent window shades, causing the wood beams and linen-covered tables to glow. In the pristine, state-of-theart kitchen, a cook sends a shower of snipped chives onto a soft-cooked egg enriched with cream, maple syrup, and crunchy salt, still in its delicate shell. Another cook arranges bright red prawns, pulled from the waters of Monterey Bay this morning, now redolent of cardamom and fennel, over gleaming slices of cucumber.

As each successive dish arrives, I'm struck by the arresting beauty of the food itself: a tender wood pigeon roasted in a savory salt mix and served in a bright halo of crushed raspberries and hazelnuts; a filet of silky-rich Copper River salmon topped with tiny jewels of smoked steelhead roe and a briny-sweet roasted-tuna sauce; a cherry blossom mousse crowned with a confetti of toasted almonds and meringue "kisses". The compositions are so artfully arranged, so brilliantly expressive and personal, that I can't imagine their being replicated. And yet, for all the elegant presentations and impressive technical skills displayed on each plate, what impresses you first is flavor, intricate layers of flavor.

At Manresa there is also a palpable connection with the earth and, more specifically, with the fields and hills that lie just miles from the restaurant's door. The foundation of chef David Kinch's cooking is laid 25 miles southeast of his kitchen, at Love Apple Farm, a biodynamic farm in the Santa Cruz Mountains that is the principal supplier

of fresh produce to the restaurant. There, grower Cynthia Sandberg produces, among hundreds of other things both familiar and exotic, Peruvian purple potatoes, bright green sunflower sprouts, dozens of kinds of heirloom tomatoes, painted lady runner beans, a kaleidoscopic array of herbs, and fresh organic eggs.

Vegetables pulled from the ground at the farm in the morning often end up on the plate the same evening without ever having made a layover in a refrigerator. Kinch offers a simple starter called Into the Vegetable Garden: a selection of seasonal vegetables served raw or cooked gen-

KINCH'S COMPOSITIONS ARE SO ARTFULLY ARRANGED, SO BRILLIANTLY EXPRESSIVE, THAT I CAN'T IMAGINE THEIR BEING REPLICATED

tly in their own juices and presented on the plate with a dusting of dehydrated chicory "dirt" that tastes earthy and bright at the same time. In another cook's hands this dish might come across as precious, but with each bite you sense Kinch's reverence for the garden and his passion for keeping the vegetables as alive as possible. Kinch was born in Pennsylvania and has worked in restaurants in New York City and San Francisco. I asked him once what had brought him to tiny Los Gatos. "I'm a surfer," he told me equably. "I wanted a more integrated life." Witnessing this mix of creativity, artistry, and grounded philosophy, I'd say he has succeeded. —Joyce Goldstein, author of Mediterranean Fresh (W. W. Norton, 2008)

The dining room at Manresa, above. Facing page, country captain, a curried chicken dish (see page 97 for a recipe).

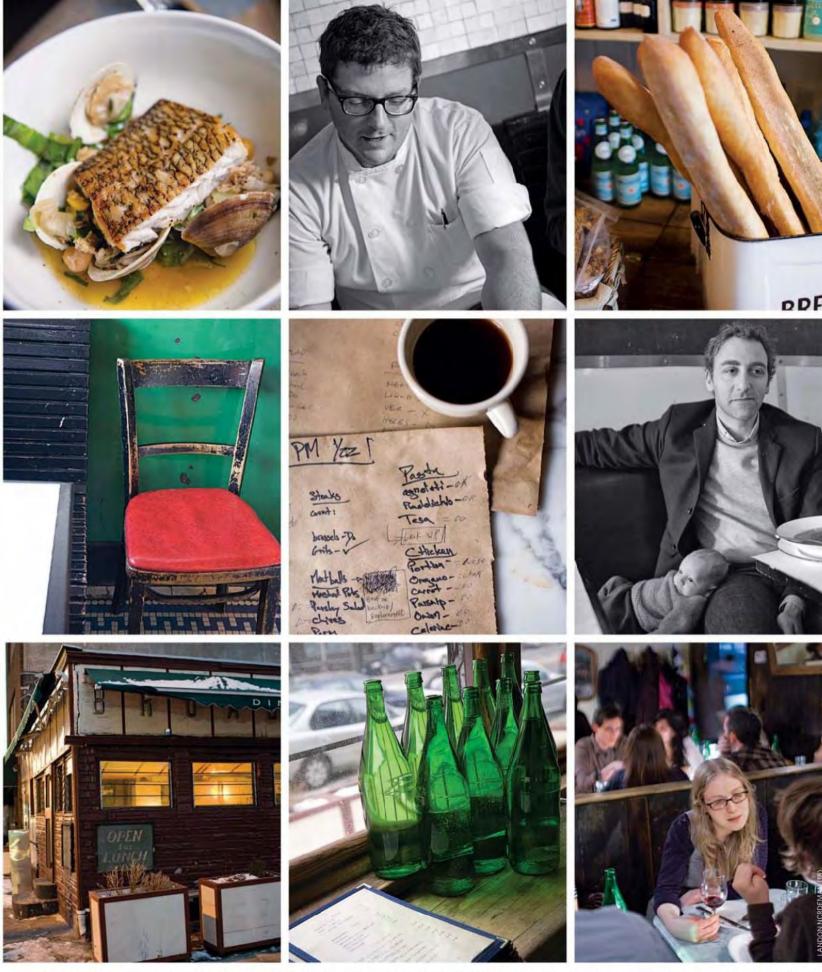


LIVE FREE DORED DORED DORED





Top row, left to right, the façade of Diner, the sister restaurant of Marlow & Sons; crostini with black-eyed peas, radicchio, and raisins; copies of a culinary magazine published locally by the Marlow & Sons owners; black bass with chickpeas, clams, and chorizo; executive chef Sean Rembold; bread for sale in the shop at Marlow & Sons. Middle row, left to right, Collin Beatti, a barista at the restaurant; ravioli stuffed with Brooklyn-made ricotta, sage, and a farm-fresh



egg yolk; Sarah Andrews, a server at Diner; in the dining room of Diner; a kitchen prep list for Marlow & Sons; Marlow & Sons co-owner Andrew Tarlow with his son, Roman. Bottom row, left to right, Marisa Marthaller, a manager at Diner and Marlow & Sons; counter stools at Diner, original fixtures of the old Kullman din ing car; brick chicken; the exterior of Diner; bottles of water awaiting delivery to tables at Diner; the dinner hour at Marlow & Sons.



Nº10Musso and Frank Grill

One of Los Angeles's oldest restaurants has the heart of a newcomer

vard since 1919, and virtually everything about it recalls another time. The coat racks evoke an era when people wore hats (or at least took them off in restaurants); the drinks—granddaddies of what today's mixologists make—bear hoary names like the side car and the rob roy. The wood trim—and—red Naughahide interior is elegant but subdued; a Maxfield Parish—esque mural of autumnal New England woods summons an age when a West Coast dining room was judged by how well it captured the glamour of one in the East.

The menu is unapologetically atavistic. The food has little to do with local and seasonal sourcing or with any single chef's blazing creative vision; instead, with dishes like jellied consommé and braised oxtail bourgeoise, it is drawn from a playbook passed down through dynasties of cooks. Here are stuffed celery spears, plump with blue cheese, that arrive on a bed of ice (see page 96 for a recipe). Here are hearty daily specials—such as Tuesday's corned beef and cabbage and Wednesday's sauerbraten with potato pancakes—and dishes whose nomenclature is culled from old-line French dining: the lobster is thermidor, the sweetbreads are jardinière, the lamb kidneys are turbigo, and the shrimp are served with a sauce poulette. All are seasoned carefully but assertively. And all are extremely good.

For me, though, the soul of the place is the waiters. Their ages are advanced, yet the term *avuncular* hardly comes to mind. Outfitted in red bolero jackets held closed with one button (the busboys wear a green version), they are the

Manny Aguirre, a bartender at Musso and Frank Grill, pouring a margarita.

dignified heirs to a tradition in which being a waiter was a stately occupation. They rarely smile, and never does their tone suggest anything above a scrupulously maintained cordiality. You have to read them to communicate. The only way you might register that it is unnecessary to order the mushroom toast between the cracked crab and the club steak is to spot a momentarily stretched upper lip or a fleeting change of stance.

Founded by restaurateurs Joseph Musso and Frank Toulet and originally called Frank's Francois Café, Musso's has lived through entire epochs, as attested to by the names of famous patrons inscribed on bronze stars embedded in the sidewalk out front: from John Barrymore and Buck Owens to Aaron Spelling and Gene Autry. In terms of Hollywood as a cultural institution, the place has witnessed the progression from silents to talkies to color to blockbusters; in terms of Hollywood as a place, it has traversed creation, glamour, decline, neglect, and, lately, renewal.

The interior of the cream-colored building consists of two large rooms. The bar is located in the newer one (it dates from 1953), a cheery area decorated with wallpaper depicting a bucolic scene with pheasants. I prefer the older dining room, where the lighting is lower and conversation takes place against the background noise of the grill man cooking steaks behind the counter, my favorite spot for dining alone. One can sit in this environment and feel part of the past without being entombed in it. Unlike places that have logged far less time on Earth but have set up little shrines of framed clippings and photos, Musso's breezily dismisses any self-conscious evocation of its age. In this, it is true to the spirit of Hollywood, where to focus on longevity is to admit to being relegated to iconhood. —Patric Kuh, restaurant critic for Los Angeles magazine

AMERICAN CLASSICS

The Cafeteria

During the 1970s, that stifling era of economic stauflation and chicken nuggetization, no place sustained our Georgia family like the flagship S&S Cafeteria in Macon. My mother tipped the white-jacketed tray men extravagantly for table delivery of vegetable soup and corn muffins and for return dispatches of butter pats and captain's wafers. From the Jell-O salad end of the tray line, my father planned his run, shrewdly calculating the pork payload in the wedges of cracklin' com bread down near the register. Places like



S&S, a chain that's still around, reject the notion that cafeteria food has to be industrial food. The fare-broiled pork chops, chicken pan pie, turnip greens-is the sort of back-ofstove cooking that Southerners, no matter their class or race, claim as their own. They've gently updated the menus over the years, but my 86-year-old father still craves the cracklin' corn bread. And so do I. -John T. Edge



Nº11Blue Hill at Stone Barns

Chef Dan Barber's passions and politics come together on the plate

T'S ONE THING TO ORDER the Berkshire pork entrée at Dan Barber's New York City restaurant, Blue Hill. A black-clad server brings you a tender chop or loin flanked by petit pan squash or scarlet runner beans on a stark white plate. The dish is delicious—the more so, perhaps, when you consider that the bulk of the ingredients were lovingly raised on a small farm just an hour north of the restaurant.

It's quite another thing, though, to experience the pork plate at Barber's other restaurant, Blue Hill at Stone Barns, in Pocantico Hills, New York. Here, that very farm is all around you; by the time you sink into your chair in the elegant dining room, with its muted tones and rustic details, you've already driven down a winding lane past wooded enclosures where those Berkshire hogs are happily rooting around. If you've brought your boots, maybe you've trudged along the footpaths amid hills etched with rows of chard, brussels sprouts, and carrots. Then, perhaps, you glanced back at the old stone-and-timber buildings that house the restaurant and its kitchens and realized that it was time to eat.

There is no menu and few decisions to be made. A server brings a bowl of freshly harvested potatoes and butcher boards on which various vegetables are arranged—the raw materials for tonight's menu. Your server chats with you about what you want for dinner. She asks you whether you like pork, and the answer is "Of course". Soon, dishes begin

to arrive, including one called Everything from the Pig: braised pork belly, fried pig's ear, apple-spiced loin sausage, seared jowls, and a velvety pâté, all on a wood-and-slate plate. Maybe you've never thought of eating pig's ear before, but you know that the animal led a clean and contented life, so you tuck in. It is salty, crackly, and very, very good.

Blue Hill at Stone Barns could be called the ultimate farm-totable restaurant. The 75-seat dining room is housed within the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, an 80-acre nonprofit farm and education center on part of a former Rockefeller estate. In that regard, the pleasure of eating Barber's food takes on an added dimension. It's the satisfaction of seeing really good ideas—about how food should be raised and prepared—being put into practice by really good cooks. For years before Stone Barns opened, in 2004, Barber was a vocal advocate for sustainable food practices; Stone Barns is where he puts his theories to work. In the restaurant's sun-dappled kitchen, the chef (who co-owns both Blue Hill restaurants with his brother David and sister-in-law Laureen; the name refers to their grandmother's New England farm) collaborates with farmers, livestock managers, and cooks to create dishes that honor the integrity of the ingredients-whether it's slender lemon-and-salt-dressed carrots, heirloom potato chips laced with sage (see page 96 for a recipe), or a lettuce soup topped with a slow-poached farm egg. "The best flavor always runs in parallel lines with the best ethical decisions," Barber says. Stone Barns makes his case. - Rachel Wharton, a New York City-based food writer

AMERICAN CLASSICS

The Sushi Bar

My Japanese dad never learned to cook Japanese food, Every weekend after my parents divorced, my three siblings and I would be exiled to his house near Princeton. New Jersey, where our choices were between spaghetti and eating out. We ate out a lot, usually at Sakura House, a Japanese restaurant in a nearby mall. When we walked through the door, we were greeted with a warm. 'Irashaimase [Welcomel!", and when the food started arriving, the marooned feeling left us. We devoured California rolls, baskets of tempura veggies, skewers of chicken teriyaki, and a colorful array of sushi, ordered in Japanese by my dad.



Comforting rituals framed our meals, from popping the heated hand towels out of their plastic wrapping to stuffing our pockets with afterdinner mints. Sakura House is gone now, but its legacy lives on: wherever I am in the world, if I can find a seat at a sushi bar, I feel I've come home,—Karen Shimizu

Sage potato chips, facing page (see page 96 for a recipe).







heirloom grains, beets, corn, baby greens, and salsify; cook Chris Diminno carrying ingredients from a storage room to the kitchen; herb-crusted lamb; a chalkboard, in chef Dan Barber's office, listing menu

notes and tasting schedules.

RESTAURANTS THAT MATTER







First Courses



CROSTINI WITH BLACK-EYED PEAS, RADICCHIO, AND RAISINS

SERVES 4

The appeal of this first course (from Marlow & Sons; see page 82) comes from the bright contrast of earthy and tangy flavors.

- 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 cloves garlic (1 finely chopped, 1 smashed)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 15-oz. can black-eyed peas,
 1 cup liquid reserved
 Kosher salt and freshly ground
 black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/4 cup golden raisins
- 1 head radicchio, sliced lengthwise into 1/2" wedges
- 1 tbsp. sherry vinegar
- 8 slices crusty bread, such as ciabatta
- Heat 5 tbsp. oil in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add 2 tsp. thyme, the chile flakes, chopped garlic, and bay leaf and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, 2 minutes. Add black-eyed peas and reserved liquid and bring to a boil.
- More recipes from the restaurants featured in this issue at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE119

Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until the flavors have melded, 10 minutes. Discard bay leaf and transfer the pea mixture to a blender; purée until smooth. (Sprinkle in a little water if mixture is too dry.) Season with salt

RESTAURANTS THAT MATTER

and pepper; transfer to a bowl and set pea purée aside.

- Meanwhile, add wine and raisins to a 1-qt. saucepan and bring to a boil; set aside to let raisins plump. Heat 3 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add radicchio, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until radicchio is wilted and golden brown, about 8 minutes. Toss with vinegar and set radicchio aside.
- Sheat oven to 450°. Brush bread with remaining oil and transfer to a baking sheet. Toast breac, flipping once, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Rub toast with remaining garlic clove. To serve, spread pea purée over each toast, top with radicchio and raisins, and sprinkle with remaining thyme.



SAGE POTATO CHIPS

MAKES ABOUT 25 CHIPS
This whimsical snack is served at Blue
Hill at Stone Barns (see page 90).

- 2 large yukon gold potatoes, unpeeled Canola oil, for frying
- 25 sage leaves
 Sea salt and freshly ground
 white pepper, to taste
 Smoked paprika, for garnish
- ② Using a mandoline (see page 115), cut potatoes into 1/16"-thick slices. Make 2 slits in center of each slice (see "How to Thread a Potato Chip", facing page).
- 2 Pour enough oil into a 6-qt. pot for it to reach a depth of 2". Heat over medium heat until oil registers 200° on a deep-fry thermometer. Working in batches, fry the slices for about 10 seconds each. Using a slotted spoon,

transfer chips, in a single layer, to a rack set over a baking sheet.

③ Thread a sage leaf through the slits in each slice (see "How to Thread a Potato Chip", facing page). Raise oil temperature to 360°. Working in batches, fry slices again, turning occasionally, until golden and crisp, 1–2 minutes. Transfer potato chips to paper towels and sprinkle with salt, pepper, and paprika.



STUFFED CELERY

SERVES 4

The cooks at Musso and Frank Grill in Los Angeles (see page 88) take the extra step of peeling the celery for this old-school hors d'oeuvre before stuffing it.

- 6 oz. crumbled blue cheese (about ³/₄ cup), preferably Roquefort, at room temperature
- 6 oz. cream cheese, cut into 1" cubes, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 tsp. worcestershire sauce
- 1/8 tsp. hot sauce, preferably
 Tabasco
 Green leaf lettuce, for garnish
 Crushed ice (optional)
- 10 ribs celery, ends trimmed Paprika, for garnish
- 5 pitted black California olives, halved, for garnish Curly parsley, for garnish
- In the bowl of a food processor, purée the blue cheese, cream cheese, sour cream, worcestershire, and hot sauce until mixture is smooth and creamy. Using kitchen shears, cut 1/4" from a corner of a 1-qt. resealable plastic bag and fit with a small pas-

try tip (see page 115). Using a rubber spatula, transfer the cheese mixture to the bag and refrigerate for 30 minutes to firm up.

② Arrange lettuce on a platter and top with 1 cup crushed ice (if using). Line platter with celery sticks. Pipe about 2 tbsp. chilled cheese mixture into each celery stick. Sprinkle paprika over celery and garnish each with an olive half and parsley.

Main Courses



BO LUC LAC

(Vietnamese-Style Sautéed Beef) SERVES 4

The key to making this dish (from the Slanted Door; see page 94), often called "shaking beef", is to sear the meat in small batches in a very hot wok or skillet so that it browns quickly.

- 1 lb. beef tenderloin, trimmed and cut into 1" cubes
- 6 tbsp. canola oil
- 7 tsp. sugar
- 4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 bunch watercress, for garnish
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. fish sauce Juice of 2 limes
- 3 scallions, cut to 1" lengths
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 3 Toss the beef with 2 tbsp. oil, 1 tsp. sugar, and 2 tsp. pepper in a large bowl and season with salt. Cover bowl and set aside to let marinate at room temperature for 1 hour, or refrigerate overnight.

- 2 Dress a platter with watercress and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together the vinegar, soy sauce, 2 tsp. sugar, and fish sauce to make a vinaigrette; set aside. In a small bowl, make a dipping sauce by whisking together the remaining sugar and pepper with the lime juice; season dipping sauce with salt and set aside.
- 3 Drain beef. pat dry with paper towels, and discard marinade. Working in 2 batches, heat 2 tbsp. oil in a flat-bottomed wok or a 12" nonstick skillet over high heat. When cil begins to smoke, add half of the beef. Cook, flipping once, until well browned and medium rare, 3-4 minutes. Add half of the scallions, garlic, and red onions and cook, stirring constantly, until wilted, 30 seconds. Add half of the vinaigrette and butter; toss to combine. Spoon beef and vegetables over platter of watercress. Serve with lime dipping sauce.

Pairing note Wine director Mark Ellenbogen (seepage 39) recommends the 2004 Nikolaihof "Steiner Hund" Reserve Riesling (\$82) from Austria's Wachau region to complement the spicy notes and rich mouth-feel of the beef; a worthy splurge.



COUNTRY CAPTAIN

SERVES 4

This curried chicken casserole (from Watershed; see page 81) is a Southern Lowcountry classic whose name harks back to the days when ships' captains in port cities like Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, traded in spices acquired during their travels abroad.

1 3-4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces

- tsp. dried thyme
 Kosher salt and freshly ground
 black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 6 slices bacon, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 ribs celery, chopped
- 2 green bell peppers, cored, seeded, and chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, chopped (³/₄ cup tomato juice reserved)
- 3 tbsp. curry powder
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup currants, plus more for garnish
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups steamed white rice, for serving Peanuts, for garnish
- 3 Season chicken with thyme, salt, and pepper. Heat oil in a 5-qt. dutch oven over high heat. Add chicken, skin side down, and cook, turning once, until golden brown, about 12 minutes. Using tongs, transfer chicken to a plate and set aside.
- 2 Discard oil and return dutch oven to medium heat. Add bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp, 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a paper towel-lined plate; set aside. Add the garlic, celery, peppers, and onions to the dutch oven and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 10 minutes. Add tomatoes and their juice and cook, stirring frequently, until the juice thickens, about 10 minutes. Stir in the curry powder, butter, currants, and bay leaves and season with salt and pepper. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until it thickens into a chunky sauce, 30 minutes.
- ② Heat oven to 325°. Add the reserved chicken to the dutch oven, nestling it into the thick curry sauce; spoon some of the sauce over chicken. Cover and cook until chicken is very tender, about 1 nour and 15 minutes. Spoon sauce over chicken, serve with rice, and garnish with currants and peanuts.

Pairing note The fruity, mildly tannic notes of the 2006 Magito Cabernet Sauvignon Highlands Blend (\$18) from Sonoma County nicely complement the curry in this dish.



FLAT IRON STEAK WITH HERB BUTTER

SERVES 4

The herb butter for these steaks (from Marlow & Sons; see page 82) is an adaptation of a classic accompaniment called maître'd butter.

- 4 8-oz. flat iron steaks Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 3 tbsp. roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- tbsp. roughly chopped chives
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp. canola oil
- Rub steaks generously with salt and pepper and set aside to let rest for at least 30 minutes at room

temperature. Combine the butter, parsley, chives, and shallots with a fork in a medium bowl. Season lightly with salt and pepper; cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

② Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add 2 steaks and cook, flipping once, until seared and medium rare, about 8 minutes. Transfer steaks to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes. Repeat with remaining oil and steaks. To serve, smear each steak with 2 tbsp. of the herb butter.

Pairing note The peppery 2005 syrah from Napa Valley's Kuleto Estate (\$45) is big and earthy, with plenty of acidity and deep blackberry flavors that stand up to this steak.



MAQUE CHOUX AND SHRIMP

SERVES 4

This Cajun dish, similar to succotash, pairs well with rice and seafood

HOW TO THREAD A POTATO CHIP



Chef Dan Barber of Blue Hill at Stone Barns (see page 90) makes a whimsical amuse-bouche by threading a sage leaf through a potato chip (see recipe on page 96). It's easier than it sounds. After slicing the potatoes, use a paring knife to cut two parallel 3/4" slits in the center of a slice, one slit spaced about 1" from the other (above left). Next. simply pull a sage leaf up through the first slit and then down through the second (above right) until it's centered. Repeat with the remaining sage leaves and potato slices. The sage leaves become crisp when fried and lend the chips an herbaceous flavor.

- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 5 small okra, stemmed and thinly sliced crosswise
- 4 ears corn, shucked, kernels sliced off (or one 10-oz. package frozen corn)
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 16 medium shrimp (about 8 oz.), peeled, tails on
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups steamed white rice, for serving
- 1 In a 12" skillet over medium-high heat, cook bacon, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a paper towel-lined plate; set aside. Melt 1 tbsp. butter in hot bacon fat. Add garlic, shallots, peppers, and jalapeños and cook over mediumhigh heat, stirring occasionally, until

lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Increase heat to high; add okra and corn and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, about 6 minutes. Stir in scallions and remaining butter and season with salt and pepper; set aside and keep warm.

② Meanwhile, heat oven to broil and place a rack 8" from broiler element. Toss shrimp with oil in a large bowl and season with salt and pepper. Transfer shrimp in a single layer to an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet and broil, turning once using tongs, until pink and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Serve the maque choux and shrimp on top of a bed of rice; garnish with reserved bacon.



PAN-ROASTED CHICKEN WITH MADEIRA SAUCE

SERVES 2

Brining the chicken for this dish (from Gramercy Tavern; see page 74) before

cooking yields remarkably tender and savery meat.

FOR THE CHICKEN

- 2 cups packed light brown sugar
- 11/2 cups kosher salt
 - 1 cup white wine vinegar
 - 2 tbsp. freshly ground black pepper
 - 1 tbsp. mustard seeds
 - 3 cloves garlic, smashed
 - 3 sprigs thyme
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 6 cups ice cubes (about 1 lb.)
 - 2 boneless skin-on chicken
 - 2 boneless skin-on chicken thighs

FOR THE SAUCE

- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 whole chicken wings
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 5 shallots, finely chopped
- 5 sprigs thyme
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup madeira
- 2 cups chicken broth

■ Brine the chicken: Bring sugar, salt, vinegar, pepper, mustard seeds, garlic, thyme, bay leaf, and 12 cups water to a boil in an 8-qt. pot. Remove from heat; let cool for 10 minutes. Add ice and refrigerate brine until well chilled. Submerge the chicken pieces in the brine, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

2 Make the sauce: Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken wings in a single layer and cook, flipping once with tongs, until browned, about 8 minutes. Add the peppercorns, shallots, 2 sprigs thyme, and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until shallots are soft, about 2 minutes. Add the madeira and cook until reduced by half, about 2 minutes. Add the broth, bring to a broil, and reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until liquid has reduced to 1/4 cup, about 25 minutes. Skim fat from the sauce and strain sauce through a fine sieve into a 1-qt. saucepan; discard solids. Set sauce aside and cover to keep warm.

Meanwhile, heat oven to 425°. Remove chicken pieces from brine and pat dry with paper towels. Heat remaining oil in a 12" ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken skin side down and cook until golden brown, about 8 minutes. Add the remaining thyme sprigs and transfer the skillet to the oven. Cook until chicken is almost cooked through, about 15 minutes. Using tongs, flip chicken and cook until skin is crisp, 3 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes. To serve, spoon some of the sauce onto 4 plates. Halve thighs and cut breasts into 1" slices and fan out on plates. Spoon remaining sauce over top of chicken. Serve with sautéed carrots, if you like.

Pairing note The 2006 Grosjean Frères "Tzeriat" Pinot Noir (\$32) from the Valle d'Aosta region of northwestern Italy has an earthy aroma and tart edge that play well with the madeira sauce.



PUERCO EN MOLE NEGRO

(Pork with Mole Negro Sauce)
SERVES 6

You should be able to find the ingredients for this Oaxacan dish (from Topolobampo; see page 70) at most Mexican groceries (see page 115 for a mail-order source).

FOR THE PORK

- 3 canned chipotles in adobo, 3 tbsp. adobo sauce reserved
- 1/2 cup corn oil
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. ancho chile powder
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 tbsp. honey

HOW TO ROLL GNOCCHI



Making potato gnocchi like those served at the Boston restaurant Sportello (see page 64; a recipe for truffled gnocchi with peas and chanterelles appears on page 100) isn't hard. The art lies in the final shaping of the gnocchi. Start by positioning a 1" dough segment on the back of a dinner fork (above left); then slowly roll the segment down the length of the fork tines while simultaneously pressing lightly on the dough with your thumb to form a shallow indentation in the back (above right). The resulting indentation and striations will help sauce cling to the gnocchi. —Ben Mims

The SAVEUR Chef Series

MICHAEL PSILAKIS is not a man to be confined by a label. While most may know him best for single-handedly changing the face of modern Greek cuisine, only two of his four New York City restaurants are Greek. Psilakis tells us about the variety of flavors that influence his cuisine and how growing up in the States helped him in the kitchen.



What is your take on a traditional favorite Greek recipe?

What we try to do at both Kefi and Anthos restaurants is to take a dish that falls into what is labeled traditional food—which to me is mostly indigenous peasant food—and capture the essence of that dish while influencing it with the culture I grew up with in the U.S. My food reflects the ideas of a first generation: the American-born children of immigrant parents who have a tremendous amount of pride in the old country and have passionately shared that with their children.

How does that tie into the recipes of your childhood and, consequently, what you are cooking at your most traditional Greek restaurant, Kefi?

Kefi is my attempt to bring traditional Greek food into mainstream American culture. When writing the menu, I chose foods that were recognizable and approachable, that I could then prepare with distinctively Greek flavor profiles. Rooted in all Greek food is a simplicity that I think is only rivaled by that of Italy, which we all know and love and have grown to appreciate. I think Greek food, if I have my hand in it, is the next Italian. It has the beauty of a culture intertwined in its evolution. The cuisine is founded on a Mediterranean diet that we all know is not only healthy, but also delicious. What we've been able to do at Kefi is to take the best of all these things and show the people who are walking through the doors how gloriously simple, yet interesting and entertaining Greek food can be.

What challenges have you faced when trying to capture Greek flavors with ingredients sourced from local New York producers?

Ingredients are not a challenge here when it comes to Greek food. The big hurdle is its perceived foreignness. While the spices and flavor combinations can be different, I think what makes this food so approachable are the main ingredients, which with few exceptions are grown all over the U.S.

When winter finally passes, the first thing that comes to mind is spring lamb. Being Greek, it was always something we looked forward to. The fresh lamb in America is fantastic—it's some of the best in the world. You get this wonderfully lean, yet succulent and flavorful meat that you can prepare in a tremendous number of ways. I think of this recipe as snacks for a big party, what we would call meze. It's just like eating lollipops.

GRILLED LAMB CHOPS WITH PISTACHIO "BUTTER"

SERVES 4 AS A MAIN COURSE OR 12-18 AS MEZE

- 12-18 lamb rib chops, French-trimmed, patted dry with paper towels Kosher salt and cracked black pepper
 - 2 lemons
 - 1 tsp. dry (Greek) oregano
 - 1 tbsp. each of fresh parsley, mint, and dill, coarsely chopped
 - 1 cup + ¹/₃ cup coarsely chopped pistachios
 - 1/3 cup + 1 tbsp. of extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1/3 cup coarse bread crumbs

FOR THE PISTACHIO BUTTER:

In a high-speed blender or coffee grinder combine 1 cup of pistachios and ½ cup of extravirgin olive oil. Process until you have a smooth paste. Season with salt and pepper.

FOR THE PISTACHIO CRUMB:

In small skillet over medium heat add the remaining olive oil, bread crumbs, and coarse pistachios. Toast the pistachios until golden brown and season with salt, pepper, and oregano. Cool and then mix in the fresh chopped herbs.

Preheat a charcoal or gas grill, or ridged castiron grill pan, until hot. Paint chops with extravirgin olive oil and season liberally with salt and pepper. Grill the chops until firm and char-marked, about 1½ minutes on each side, depending on their thickness and how you like the meat done. Rest the meat for 1–2 minutes. Spread the pistachio butter over each chop and top with a sprinkle of pistachio crumble. Squeeze fresh lemons over the top, drizzle with olive oil, and serve.

3 lbs. pork loin, trimmed

FOR THE MOLE

- large tomatillo, stemmed, rinsed, and quartered
- 1 small tomato, cored and halved
- small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 1 cup corn oil
- 6 dried pasilla chiles, stemmed and seeded
- 1/2 ripe plantain or banana, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 1/4 cup peanuts, plus more crushed for garnish
- 1/4 cup sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 21/2 cups chicken broth
 - 2 oz. Mexican chocolate, chopped (see page 102 for more info)
- 11/2 tsp. oregano
- 1/2 tsp. ground canela or cinnamon
- slice white sandwich bread, toasted and crumbled Kosher salt, to taste Grated piloncillo or brown sugar, to taste
- 6 sprigs cilantro, for garnish
- Marinate the pork: In a blender, purée the chipotles with their reserved sauce, oil, vinegar, chile powder, oregano, honey, and garlic until smooth and season with salt and pepper. Put pork into a 1-gallon resealable plastic bag and pour sauce over pork. Refrigerate overnight.
- Make the mole: Heat oven to broil and position a rack 10" from the heating element. Toss tomatillos, tomatoes, and onions with 2 tbsp. oil in a bowl and transfer to an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet; broil, turning once with tongs, until soft and well browned, about 15 minutes. Transfer charred vegetables to a large bowl; set aside. Heat oven to 400°. Transfer chiles to the aluminum foil-lined baking sheet and toast, turning once, until dark and fragrant, about

3 minutes. Transfer toasted chiles to large bowl and cover with 3 cups boiling water; set aside to let soften for 15 minutes. Drain chiles, reserving $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soaking liquid; set aside.

- Heat ³/₄ cup oil in a 3-qt. highsided skillet over medium-high heat. Add plantains (or bananas) and cook, stirring frequently, until browned, 2 minutes. Add peanuts and sesame seeds and cook, stirring frequently, until browned, 3 minutes. Add the raisins, the tomatillo mixture, and the chiles with the reserved soaking liquid, along with the chicken broth, chocolate, oregano, canela, and bread, bring the mixture to a boil and remove from heat. Working in batches, purée the chile mixture in a blender to make a smooth mole.
- Meat remaining oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add mole and cook, whisking frequently, until it thickens slightly, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and piloncillo; set mole aside and keep warm.
- Remove pork from adobo, season lightly with salt, and transfer to a rack set in a roasting pan. Discard adobo. Cook the pork, flipping once, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted into center of pork reads 150°, about 45 minutes. Transfer pork to a platter; let rest for 10 minutes. Slice pork into 1/2"-thick medallions. Divide mole between 6 plates. Arrange pork over mole and garnish with peanuts and cilantro.



TRUFFLED GNOCCHI WITH PEAS AND CHANTERELLES

SERVES 4

The secret to making these pillow-soft

gnocchi (from Sportello; see page 64) is to knead the dough as little as possible; if it's overworked, the gnocchi become gluey and tough.

FOR THE GNOCCHI

- 1 lb. russet potatoes (about 2), unpeeled
- 11/4 cup flour, plus more for dusting
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. truffle oil (see below right and page 115)
- 1 egg, beaten

FOR THE SAUCE

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 10 oz. mushrooms, preferably chanterelles, roughly chopped
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 3/4 cup peas, fresh or frozen
- 2 tsp. finely chopped fresh thyme Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped chives
- Make the gnocchi: Boil potatoes in a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water until tencer, about 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes; let cool slightly and peel. Work potatoes through a food mill or a potato ricer onto a lightly floured surface. Sprinkle the flour and salt over the potatoes and mix together with your hands. Form a mound and create a well in the center; add truffle oil and egg. Gently knead dough until it just comes together, adding a little more flour if it begins to stick.
- ② Lightly flour a parchment paperlined baking sheet and set aside. Using a rolling pin, roll dough to a ½" thickness. Cut into ½"-wide strips. Roll each strip between your hands and the work surface to form ropes. Cut each rope into 1" segments. Working with one segment at a time, roll it down the back of a small fork so that the tines make ridges on the surface of the dough (see "How to Roll Gnocchi", page 98). Transfer gnocchi to the prepared baking sheet; cover with a kitchen towel and refrigerate until ready to cook.

Make the sauce: Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms to skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until light brown, about 5 minutes. Raise heat to high; add cream, peas, and thyme and cook, stirring occasionally, until cream reduces by half. Season mushroom sauce with salt and pepper and remove skillet from heat. Boil gnocchi in the salted water until they float, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer gnocchi to mushroom sauce, add chives, and toss to combine.

TRUFFLE OIL

Less expensive than fresh truffles (the most prized varieties of which can cost up to \$1,400 per pound), a high-quality truffle oil adds an earthy, complex taste to pasta dishes such as the gnocchi with peas and chanterelles shown at left. It's also added to whipped preparations like deviled eggs and mashed potatoes to add unexpected depth of flavor. Truffle oils range in color from clear yellow to cloudy green; some include a sliver of whole truffle in the bottle. All-natural truffle oil is usually made by infusing clive oil or grapeseed oil with pieces of truffle, though many producers these days augment their product with a chemical compound that mimics the truffle's taste and aroma, making for a more potent but less refined (and sometimes

acrid) taste. We prefer the purer character of all-natural oils like Truffières de Rabasse Black Truffle Olive Oil, from France (\$36), and Oregon White Truffle Oil (\$30), which contans the essence of Oregon truffles (it's the only truffle oil currently sold in this country containing domestically grown truffles). Truffle oil should be stored in a cool, dark place. (See THE PANTRY, page 115, for a source.) -Leah Koenig



ROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; MICHAEL KRAUS

SAVEUR MENU

SAVEUR's guide to EVENTS, PROMOTIONS & PRODUCTS



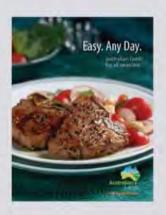
Almonds Are Inspiring

Available in more forms than any other tree nut and usable in countless ways, almonds should be the inspiration behind your next dish. They have an incredible ability to work with a wide range of flavor profiles, from sweet to savory.

Roast them, grind them, sprinkle them, chop them; just make sure almonds are in. For more information on the inspiring and versatile role of almonds, visit:



www.AlmondsInspire.com



Easy. Any Day.

Sure, Australian Lamb is great for the holidays. It's also perfect for quick-and-easy everyday meals. Lean and rich in nutrients, with a mild taste and delicious flavor, it's a smart choice everyone at your dining table will love—which makes any day a great day to enjoy Australian Lamb!

Visit our website to order a FREE copy of our new cookbook, Easy. Any Day., featuring 28 pages of seasonal recipes your whole family will love!

www.australian-lamb.com/sa



Stir Your Soul

This summer, from July 8–12, spirits from around the world will descend on America's most soulful city as Tales of the Cocktail returns to New Orleans.

For tickets, event schedules, and accommodations for this year's soul stirring good time, visit our website:



www.TalesoftheCocktail.com



A Toast at Tailor!

On February 2, SAVEUR hosted a party at Tailor to fête its partnership with Tales of the Cocktail, the annual five-day culinary and cocktail festival held in New Orleans. Joined by mixologists, journalists, and leading members of the spirits movement, the excitement and drinks flowed freely.

Tailor, a celebrated New York City restaurant and cocktail lounge, features two of the most influential people working in the industry. Master mixologist Eben Freeman is a magician behind the bar creating innovative and unexpected libations. Along with renowned chef Sam Mason, the duo have created an atmosphere unlike any other, which will leave guests with a newfound appreciation for imaginative food and drinks.

www.tailornyc.com

Sides



CANLIS SALAD

SERVES 4

This salad comes from the namesake Seattle restaurant (see page 73).

- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 4 slices country white bread, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 egg, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 lb. slab bacon, cut into 1/2" cuhes
- cup grated pecorino
- 1 cup mixed red and yellow grape tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup torn mint leaves
- 3 tbsp. oregano leaves
- 5 scallions, chopped
- 2 heads romaine, cored and cut crosswise into 1" strips

oregano, thyme, bread, and garlic together in a large bowl and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and bake, stirring frequently, until croutons are golden, about 15 minutes. Set croutons aside to let cool.

- 2 Whisk together egg and lemon juice in a medium bowl. Slowly drizzle in oil, whisking constantly to make a smooth vinaigrette. Season with pepper: set aside.
- 1 In a 10" skillet, bring 1 cup water to a boil. Add bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until water evaporates, 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and cook until bacon crisps, about 5 minutes: let cool. Toss bacon, reserved croutons, vinaigrette, and remaining ingredients in a large salad bowl and season with salt and pepper.



PURÉE DE POMMES DE TERRE

(Potato Purée)

SERVES 6-8

Chef Joël Robuchon (see page 58) serves these ultra-creamy potatoes at all of his restaurants in the U.S.

Heat oven to 325°. Toss butter,

- 2 lbs. yellow-fleshed potatoes, such as yukon gold, unpeeled Kosher salt, to taste
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 lb. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 1 Boil potatoes in an 8-qt. pot of salted water until tender, about 25 minutes. Drain potatoes and set aside to let cool slightly. Meanwhile, bring milk to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan; remove from heat, cover, and set aside.
- 2 Peel potatoes and pass them through a food mill into a 4-qt. saucepan set over medium-low heat. Using a rubber spatula, turn potatoes frequently until they take on a drier, fluffier consistency, 2-3 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Working in batches, vigorously stir in the butter until mixture is creamy. Whisk in warmed milk, season potatoes with salt, and transfer them to a warm serving bowl.

Desserts



CHOCOLATE CARAMEL TART

SERVES 8

When making this dessert (from Marlow & Sons; see page 82), we found that darker, dutch-process cocoa powder makes for a more flavorful, cookie-like crust.

FOR THE CRUST

- 11/2 cups flour
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tbsp. dutch-process unsweetened cocoa powder (see page 115)
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 10 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and softened
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. confectioners'

sugar

- 2 egg yolks, preferably at room temperature
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

FOR THE CARAMEL

11/2 cups sugar

- 3 tbsp. light corn syrup
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- tbsp. unsalted butter
- tbsp. heavy cream
- tbsp. crème fraîche

FOR THE GANACHE

- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 4 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped (see page 115) Gray sea salt for garnish (see page 115)
- Make the crust: Heat oven to 350°. Combine flour, cocoa powder, and salt in a medium bowl and set aside. Using a handheld mixer, cream the butter and sugar in a large bowl until mixture is pale and fluffy; mix in yolks and vanilla. Mix in dry ingredients. Transfer dough to a 9" fluted tart pan with a removable bottom and press dough evenly into bottom and sides of pan. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Prick the tart shell all over with a fork and bake until cooked through, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool.
- 2 Make the caramel: In a 1-qt. saucepan, whisk together sugar, corn syrup, salt, and 6 tbsp. water and bring to a boil. Cook, without stirring, until a candy thermometer inserted into the syrup reads 365°. Remove pan from heat and whisk in butter, cream, and crème fraîche (the mixture will bubble up) until smooth. Pour caramel into cooled tart shell and let cool slightly; refrigerate until firm, 4-5 hours.
- Make the ganache: Bring cream to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Put chocolate into a medium bowl and pour in hot cream; let sit for 1 minute, then stir slowly with a rubber spatula until smooth. Pour ganache evenly over tart and refrigerate until set, 4-5 hours. Sprinkle tart with sea salt, slice, and serve chilled.

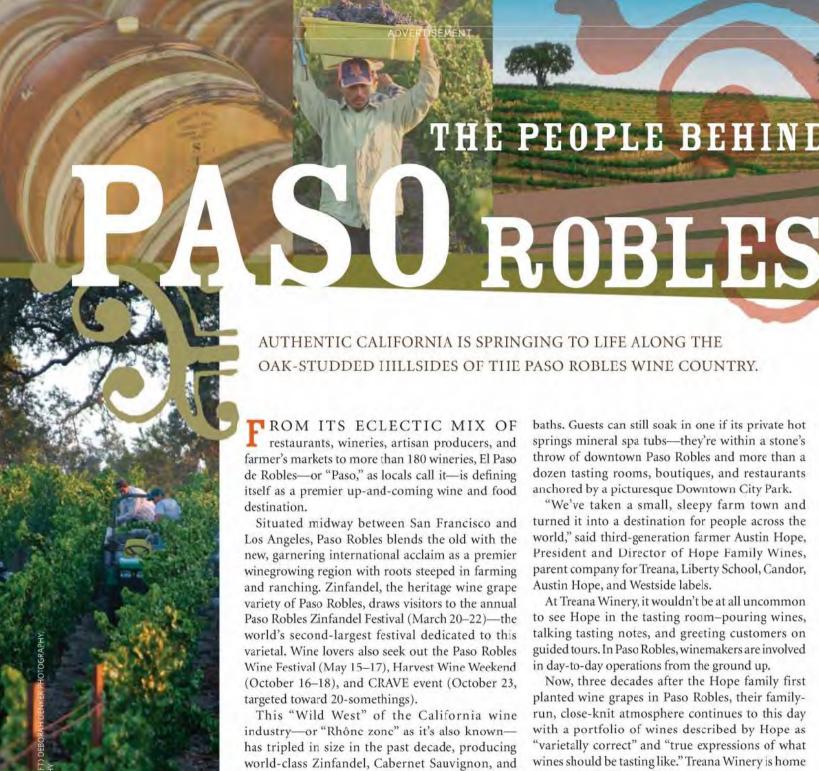
MEXICAN CHOCOLATE

Traditional Mexican chocolate, with its intensely tannic, spicy flavor, is an essential ingredient for complex moles, or sauces, like the ones chef Rick Bayless makes at his Chicago restaurant Topolobampo (see page 70; a rec-

> previous two pages). Unlike European-style baking chocolate, traditional Mexican chocolate is never conched (rolled together with vanilla, sugar, and cocoa butter urtil it becomes smooth). Instead, the cacao beans are coarsely ground, toasted, and combined with cinnamon and ground almonds; then the mixture is molded into cylinders or disks. While the best Mexican chocclate is still handmade on a grinding stone, there are several good commercial brands widely available in the States. The most popular is Ibarra (\$4,25 per 18.6-ounce box). -Ben Conniff

ipe for his pork with mole negro sauce appears on the





more than 40 varietals, including proprietary Paso Robles blends of Rhône and Bordeaux, all tempered by microclimates and cool Pacific breezes that drive massive temperature swings. Visitors can

stroll down Highway 1 for a tour of Hearst Castle or make an appointment with the Abalone Farm in Cayucos for fresh, farm-raised red abalone.

Flights arrive daily in nearby San Luis Obispo, a mere 30-minute drive from wine country.

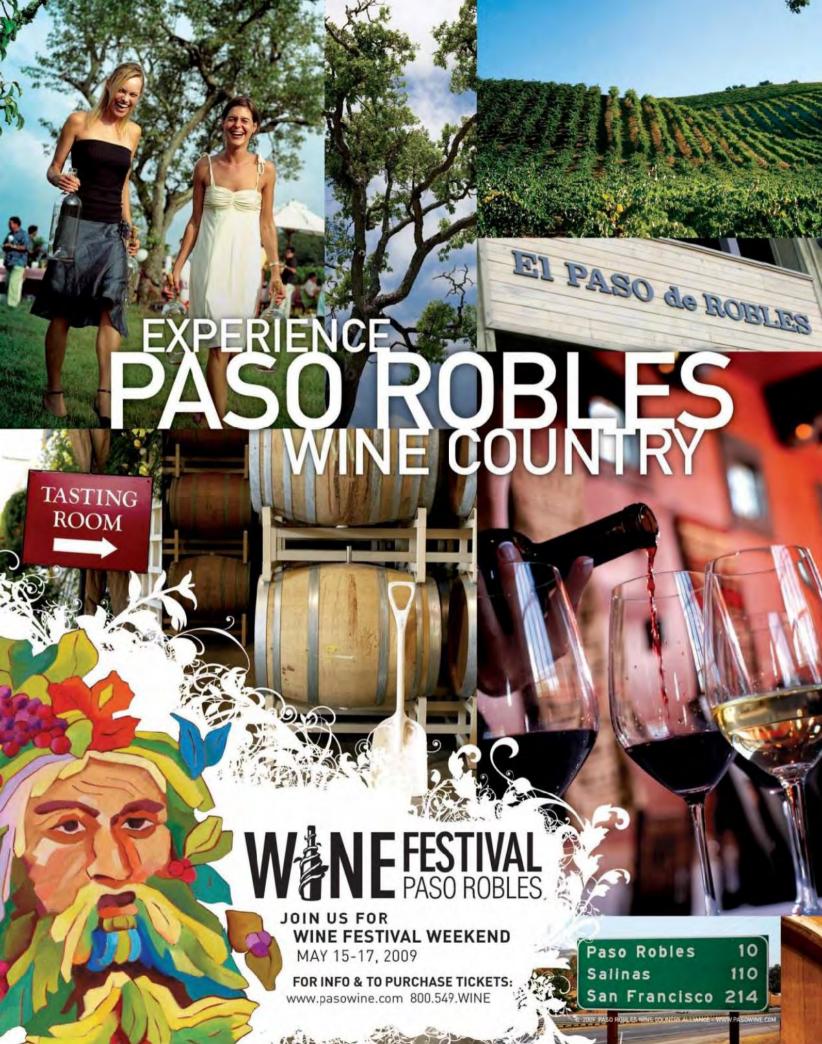
Paso Robles Inn, situated in the heart of downtown Paso Robles, combines the charm of the old with amenities of the new. The inn was renowned for travelers headed along El Camino Real trail for its mineral hot springs and warm mud

to the popular Treana Red, a Cabernet Sauvignonbased blend from Paso Robles, and Treana White Viognier/Marsanne blend from Monterey County's Mer Soleil Vineyard, among others.

Wild Horse Winery, founded by Ken Volk in 1981 and named after wild mustangs that galloped east of its vineyards, operates under the motto Live Naturally, Enjoy Wildly. Sheep graze vineyard land, composted tea nourishes plantings, and an organic heirloom garden awaits guests.

"Most of the work happens in the vineyard," said Clayton Brock, Director of Winemaking.

Steve Lohr, J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines' President of Planning and Development and son of founder





Meet AUSTIN HOPE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF WINEMAKING FOR HOPE FAMILY WINES

Austin Hope was eight years old when he began working in his family's vineyard. It was here he was introduced to the philosophy that defines the Hope family: great wines are made in the vineyard. Today, Hope is the President and Director of Winemaking for Hope Family Wines, where he oversees Treana, Austin Hope, and Candor wines. Based in Paso Robles, they are one of the various family businesses that make this picturesque region so unique. Down to earth and dusty, this blue-collar town turned winemaking destination has transformed quickly without forgetting its humble roots.

The Hopes have been working for decades with family-owned grape growers to produce the heavenly Treana Red. This Super Paso blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah is a star among the popular blends coming from this region. Treana White, grown in the Santa Lucia Highlands, is a delicious blend of Viognier and Marsanne, exploding with tropical fruit flavors and bright acidity.

Under the self-titled Austin Hope label, the Syrah and Grenache are beautiful estate-grown examples of boutique, artisan winemaking at its best. It is easy to understand Hope's passion for working with high quality fruit by enjoying a glass of his dark and luscious Syrah.

Having seen the explosion of wineries in his hometown over the past twenty years, Hope is now a veteran of this up-and-coming region. He keeps it all in perspective, remarking, "We just need to keep growing amazing fruit and not get ahead of ourselves. Keep the focus on quality and people will continue to drink our wines." We know he'll keep his end of the deal.

www.treana.com



Meet FLOYD of WILD HORSE WINERY

From winemaking team Clay Brock and Chrissy Wittmann to Floyd the llama who protects the weed-eating sheep, Wild Horse Winery truly follows the mantra of "live naturally and enjoy wildly." In addition to Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay, the heirloom and unbridled wines such as Verdelho, Viognier, Blaufrankisch, and Zinfandel are all worth experiencing. They're open daily for tastings and picnics from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

www.wildhorsewinery.com

Meet the PASO ROBLES INN

Travelers have been visiting the Paso Robles Inn for over a century, lured by the natural artesian waters known for their tranquil and healing qualities. The original grand hotel, built in the 1890's, was world-renowned for its lavish bathhouse and impeccable service.

Today, guests of the Paso Robles Inn continue to enjoy the natural mineral waters from the comfort of their own

private tub in the deluxe spa rooms or luxurious suites. Centrally located in historic downtown Paso Robles, the inn is nestled in a beautiful garden setting and boasts professional service,



a world-class steakhouse, coffee shop, lounge, and elegant banquet facilities. Experience the grace and grandeur of the historic Paso Robles Inn.

www.pasoroblesinn.com

Jerry Lohr, just about summed up Paso's approach. "We consider ourselves farmers first, winegrowers second, and winemakers third," he said.

For Gary Eberle, a pioneer who introduced Paso to Syrah in the 1970s, there's plenty of reason to stay close to home

"It's a natural evolution," Eberle said, "We've got great wine, food, and a friendly town—there is no place I would rather be than in Paso Robles."

PASO ROBLES DIRECTORY

PASO ROBLES INN 800-676-1713 www.pasoroblesinn.com

PASO ROBLES WINE COUNTRY ALLIANCE 800-549-WINE (9463) www.pasowine.com

> TREANA 805-238-6979 www.treana.com

WILD HORSE WINERY 805-434-2541 www.wildhorsewinery.com



KITCHEN

Power Tools

MONG THE MANY THINGS we learned Among the moust this special issue was that many of the tools top chefs use can also be great allies of the home cook. Here are a few of our favorites. (See THE PANTRY, page 115, for sources.) -Ben Mims

- 1 The enamel-lined cast-iron Staub mini cocotte is ideal for melting butter, cooking ingredients in small portions, and toasting spices.
- 2 The Ateco cake tester, though designed for baking, also works well for testing the doneness of fish; you know it's cooked when the tester slides through with barely any resistance.
- 3 Available for half the price of most metal strainers, the Matfer Exoglass fine-mesh plastic strainer (known in the trade as a chinois) filters stocks and sauces to smooth perfection.
- 4 Winco aluminum "sizzle" platters are just the right size for roasting a steak, glazing a piece of fish, or melting cheese on a sandwich.
- 3 Western-style heft and functionality meet Japanese fine craftsmanship in the Misono UX10 stainless-steel chef's knife.
- 6 A lightweight but tough White Plains Linen kitchen towel, which we often fold up to use as an oven mitt as well as for drying and wiping, seems never to wear out or fray.
- 7 This built-to-last Winco 1/9-size steam table pan makes a great storage vessel for prepped ingredients and even for leftovers.
- There are bigger and more high-tech pepper mills out there, but we've become attached to this simple, handsome Peugeot model, which turns out a consistent grind and withstands serious wear and tear.
- The powerful Dynamic immersion blender purées soups and sauces right in their cooking pots and whips up large batches of mayonnaise in seconds. Though more expensive than most household brands, it will outlast them
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KITCHEN

ACut Above

OT ALL BEEFSTEAKS are created equal. The most sought after cuts—porterhouse, strip, filet mignon, and rib eye-command high prices thanks in large part to their tenderness. They come from the middle meats of the steer, otherwise known as the rib and the loin. Cuts that fall into the categories of chuck and round come from the steer's shoulder and rump, which get more exercise and are therefore tougher; they've traditionally been reserved for use in hamburger, braised dishes, and stews. In the past few years, however, a steak cut from the shoulder clod section of the chuck has gained prominence on the menus of restaurants as varied as New York City's Gramercy Tavern (see page 74) and Marlow & Sons (see page 82) and the nationwide Sizzler steak house chain. Called the flat iron, this cut is in fact the second-tenderest steak after the filet mignon.

P. 108

So named because, when cut in the traditional way (pictured below, at bottom), it resembles a clothes iron in shape, the flat iron has actually been around for a long time. (Aliases include chicken steak and top blade steak.) No one paid much attention, though, because a tough strip of connective tissue ran down its center, making it unappealing to many steak lovers. That's where Chris Calkins, a University of Nebraska

professor of animal science, enters the story. In the late 1990s he came across data showing that a steady rise in the price of the middle meats had been accompanied by a dramatic drop in the price of chuck. "The question was 'How do we add value back to the chuck?" says Calkins. He helped put together a joint research project between the University of Nebraska and the University of Florida that measured different portions of the chuck for palatability and tenderness. They determined that the tenderest portion of all was a muscle found in the shoulder clod called the top blade.

The problem was that when the top blade was cut crosswise, as it always had been, to create a flat iron steak, that seam of connective tissue was left intact. Working with meat processors, the researchers developed a way of cutting the muscle lengthwise into two halves free of connective tissue and further dividing those into rectangular steaks of six to 12 ounces (pictured below, at top). The result? In 2007 there were more than 92 million pounds of the new, improved flat iron steak sold to restaurants, where there had been virtually no sales before. "It's a winwin," says Calkins. "You get a good steak-eating experience at a price both the customer and the restaurant can afford." — *Todd Coleman*



ANDRE BARANOV



Sous vide cooking has been around for decades, but it wasn't until we started revisiting the restaurants featured in this issue that we realized just how prevalent it's become in professional kitchens. Sous vide means under vacuum in French; the process entails the use of a Cryovac machine to vacuum-seal foods in plastic bags before cooking them in precisely controlled water baths at low temperatures for hours and even days. It cooks meat and vegetables gently in their own juices and yields tender, flavorful results that even the slowest braise can't achieve. It also allows chefs greater

control. "Given the size and volume of our res-

taurant, sous vide helps us to prepare dishes

at a higher level of consistency," says Michael

Anthony, the chef at Gramercy Tavern in New York City (see page 74), where the cooks use it for chicken breasts and cauliflower. Sous vide was developed in France in the 1970s as a way to make inexpensive cuts of meat tender and juicy; though it harks back to older techniques such as cooking en papillote (in sealed parchment paper) and en bain marie (in a water bath), some chefs complain that sous vide deprives them of tactile pleasure. Indeed, most of the pros we talked with use it in tandem with other methods, such as sautéing and grilling. The equipment needed for sous vide cooking hasn't yet been adapted for home kitchens, but, given the technique's popularity, we probably won't have to wait much longer. - Hunter Lewis

Clever By Half

Halved grape tomatoes bring sweetness and color to many dishes, including the bacon-studded Canlis salad, from the Seattle restaurant of the same name (see page 73). Slicing the tiny orbs, however, can be time-consuming. So, instead of halving them individually, we use the following restaurant trick to slice a dozen in the time it would normally take to slice one. —Ben Mims







- Arrange grape tomatoes on their sides so that they're arrayed snugly in the top of the shallow plastic lid of a takeout container.
 Place another, identical lid, upside down, over the tomatoes; hold
- the top lid down firmly. Using smooth, strong horizontal motions, pass the knife between the lids, slicing through the tomatoes as you go. § Remove the top lid and, voilà, your work is done.



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CHEF SELECTIONS

"Ola is the name of my restaurant," chef Fred DeAngelo says. "It means life, healthy, alive in Hawaiian, and I try to infuse that into every aspect of my guests' dining experience." It begins at the front door—belief in his responsibility to the land led him to build the restaurant of salvaged ironwood tree trunks—and continues throughout the meal. He uses the best ingredients he can find, many grown "just a mile down the road" and served the day that they're delivered, for a modern twist on traditional island

He uses the BEST INGREDIENTS he can find, many grown "JUST A MILE DOWN THE ROAD"

dishes. Try his take on a squid lūʿau. His version stars baby octopus accompanied by pasta, roasted peppers, Maui onions, lemongrass oil, in a crab cream sauce. The vegetable selections can change daily, but look for golden beets, hearts of palm, and eggplant, just some of his imaginative choices.

Surprised by the octopus? There's also tank-raised abalone to try, part of the aquaculture boom under way, according to Dean Okimoto, president of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau. Two miles

out in the ocean, fish such as moi—once reserved for Hawaiian kings—and kampachi are raised. "The millions of gallons of clean water moving through their pens," he says, explains why they are pollutant-free and taste so divine. This may be the chief reason they're in so many hotel and restaurant kitchens, but equally important to the chefs is that buying local reduces their carbon footprint, a major ingredient in the Farm to Table recipe.

"Organic is the norm," says Okimoto, also the owner of Nalo Farms,

known for 12 different types of lettuces and greens. Most farmers cultivate their crops in the open, not in greenhouses that filter the sun's healthy rays, and the volcanic soil is richer than the sandy loam found elsewhere. Locals are used to the different—let's be honest, better—taste of local produce, but it often surprises visitors, he says. Some of his lettuces, for example, are more delicate than what visitors are accustomed to, while others, including his "spicy" arugala, are more pungent.

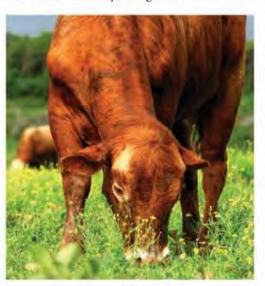


CONVERGING CULTURES

George Mavrothalassitis, chef/owner of Chef Mavro, does not dispute his reputation for being "picky, picky," One of O'ahu's first proponents of using regional ingredients, he touches base daily with specialty fishermen and dozens of boutique farmers, even one whose sole crop is vanilla, and begins the day visiting local markets. Preparing his cuisine du marché is admittedly time-consuming, but the reward is "huge," he says. "My guests

can enjoy a dining experience available only in Hawai'i."

One of his favorite suppliers is Jeanne Vana. Famous for North Shore Farms' Big Wave tomatoes, she confides that Mavrothalassitis slow-roasts them for 14 hours for his exquisite tomato confit. This summer Vana is introducing a new, heirloom variety, single-serve dessert



melon. Like all of her produce, they'll be plucked from the vine at their peak. "Nothing of ours ripens in a box," she says.

Look for her and other top growers at the island's biggest farmers' market, Saturdays on the grounds of Kapi'olani Community College. Go early and beat the crowds—they often number in the thousands. Or get your taste of Hawai'i with a visit to Chinatown. Vietnamese ngò gai, Thai lychees, Portuguese pão doce, Hawaiian mangos—all the island's cultures come together here in edible form.

FARMERS AT THE FOREFRONT

A table at Alan Wong's means more than delicious food within a beautiful environment. "I partner with farmers across the state who share our values and use responsible, safe, clean, and humane methods," Wong says, "visiting often to observe their practices, as well as see what's new." Last year he began the "farmers series" of dinners. He creates a special menu for each, using the products from one particular farm—some of them are mentioned here. His choices and preparation are often new to guests, and when they chat with the farmers who join them, the exchange is always lively, and often enlightening.

All this veggie talk may make hard-core carnivores think they'll starve. But no cattle play an equally important role in Farm to Table cuisine. It's even a "hotter topic" than naturally grown fruits and vegetables, according to Ryan Lum, owner of North Shore Cattle. He raises his grass-fed herds antibiotic- and growth hormone-free, and employs low-stress techniques to produce calmer, more contented animals. The result is better-tasting steak. Don't believe it? Try some.

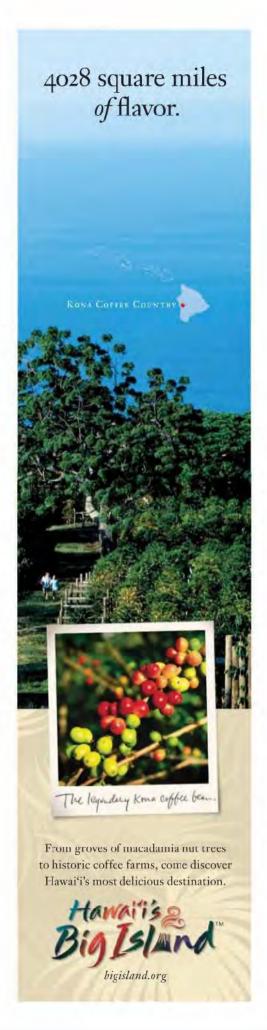
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It's actually a very old concept, one found throughout history. The unique Hawaiian version harkens back to ancient times, when the harmonious union of body, mind, and spirit was the islanders' ideal. With that in mind, picture a strawberries-and-goat-cheese picnic with chunks of lobster wrapped in ti leaves, a lunch of micro greens, mizuna and kale topped with watermelon, or a candlelit dinner highlighted by fillet of flounder in a rice flake crust, with braised green papaya and tamarind curry. It may look and taste different, but the same principles and passion guide its creation.

Several islands have their own specialties. On most, from Hilo to Moloka'i, you can sample them in a variety of ways: farmers' markets (weekends and

even weekdays), for one. This is your chance to talk with local farmers, ranchers, and artisans and try local delicacies along with freshly picked vegetables and fruits, seafood, beef, and other products. Some farms, dairies, and plantations welcome visitors to tour their properties and learn about everything from planting to harvesting.

And when you're ready for the ultimate Farm to Table cuisine, let a first-rate chef take over. Up the Kohala Coast, down the busy streets of Waikīkī, throughout Maui and elsewhere, restaurants galore serve a kaleidoscope of products in a gamut of styles. Try new things. Talk to the waitstaff and chefs. They know what they're serving...they live there.



KITCHEN

THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered food products and destinations too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY HUNTER LEWIS

Fare

To sample fine art of both the visual and culinary kinds visit Chanterelle in New York City (212/966-6960; 2 Harrison Street). Order from Sandie Lancellotti at Quality Cafe Restaurant (718/792 5534; 2944 Westchester Avenue, Bronx, New York). To eat where great chefs got their start, visit River Café (718/522-5200; 1 Water Street, Brooklyn, New York) and Crook's Corner (919/929-7643; 610 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, North Carolina). For new takes on Southern classics, visit Magnolia Grill (919/286-3609; 1002 Ninth Street, Durham, North Carolina); Hominy Grill (843/937-0930; 207 Rutledge Avenue, Charleston, South Carolina); and City Grocery (662/232-8080; 152 Courthouse Square, Oxford, Mississippi). Snack on amuse-bouches at Eleven Madison Park (212/889-0905: 11 Madison Avenue. New York, New York): Restaurant Tallent (812/330-9801; 208 North Walnut Street, Bloomington, Indiana); and Tru (312/202-0011; 676 North Saint Clair Street, Chicago, Illinois).

Kitchenwise

To see the open kitchen, visit **Barbuto** (212/924-9700; 775 Washington Street, New York, New York).

Lives

To experience two distinct faces of California dining, visit **Alice Waters**'s and **Thomas Keller**'s restaurants Chez Panisse (510/548-5525; 1517 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California) and the French Laundry (707/944-

2380; 6640 Washington Street, Yountville, California). Other Keller restaurants include Bouchon (707/944-8037: 6534 Washington Street, Yountville, California), Las Vegas (702/414-6200; 3355 Las Vegas Boulevard South, Las Vegas, Nevada), and Per Se (212/823-9335, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York).

Restaurants That Matter

Find out why restaurants in this issue matter by visiting Joël Robuchon (702/891-7925; in the MGM Grand Hotel, at 3799 Las Vegas Boulevard South, Las Vegas, Nevada); Sportello (617/737-1234; 348 Congress Street, Boston, Massachusetts); Commander's Palace (504/899-8221; 1403 Washington Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana); Topolobampo (312/661-1434; 445 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois); Canlis (206/283-3313; 2576 Aurora Avenue North, Seattle, Washington); Gramercy Tavern (212/477-0777; 42 East 20th Street, New York, New York); Manresa (408/354-4330; 320 Village Lane, Los Gatos, California); Watershed (404/378-4900; 406 West Ponce De Leon Avenue, Decatur, Georgia); Marlow & Sons (718/384-1441; 81 Broadway, Brooklyn, New York); Musso and Frank Grill (323/467-7788; 6667 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California); Blue Hill at Stone Barns (914/366-9600; 630 Bedford Road, Pocantico Hills, New York); and the Slanted Door (415/861-8032; 1 Ferry Building #3, San Francisco, California).

Recipes

To make the sage potato chips, use a benriner mandoline (\$33), at Bowery Kitchen (212/376-4982; www.bowerykitchens.com); to make the stuffed celery, use a pastry tip (\$2.50 for Ateco 829), available at Bowery Kitchen (see above); to make the pork with mole negro, use chipotle peppers in adobo (\$2.25 for a 7-ounce can), dried pasilla chiles (\$6.50 for an 8-ounce bag), Mexican chocolate (\$4.25 for an 18.6-ounce box), canela (\$1.50 for a 34-ounce bag), and piloncillo (\$2.25 for a 12-ounce package), available at MexGrocer.com

(877/463-9476; www.mexgrocer.com), and ancho chile powder (\$5.95 for a 1-ounce jar), available at Kalustyan's (800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com); to make the gnocchi, use truffle oil (\$30 for a 5-ounce bottle), available at the Joel Palmer House (503/550-5910; www.oregontruffleoil.com). To make the chocolate caramel tart, use dutch-process unsweetened cocoa powder (\$11.25 for an 8.8-ounce box), available at the City Pantry (262/537-4500; www.thecitypantry.com), and coarse gray sea salt (\$9.99 for an 8-ounce jar), available at Kalustyan's (see above).

Kitchen

Some of our favorite restaurant-kitchen tools are the Staub "mini cocotte round" (\$49.99) from Amazon.com (www.amazon .com). Ateco cake tester (\$6 for 6 testers: model number 1445), Matfer Exoglass strainer (\$53.40 for a "reinforced" strainer), Winco 11-inch oval aluminium "sizzle" platter (\$6.50), and Dynamic immersion blender (\$268 for an 8-inch "mini blender"), all from I. B. Prince (800/473-0577; www.jbprince.com); Misono UX10 stainless steel chef's knife (\$210 for a 9.2-inch knife) from Korin (800/626-2172; www.korin.com); White Plains Linen kitchen towel (\$0.45 each) from White Plains Linen (800/825-4646; ask for Todd Alpart; www.whiteplainslinen.com); Winco 1/9-size steam table pan (\$4) from Bowery Kitchen (212/376-4982; www.bowery kitchens.com); Peugeot pepper mill (\$47.95 for an 8 %-inch mill; ask for the Paris red lacquer model) from Chef's Resource (866/765-2433; www.chefsresource.com); Update International's clear squeeze bottle (\$4.35 for a case of six 12-ounce bottles) from Foodservice Direct (800/425-4679; www.food servicedirect.com); and Mora cutting board (\$42 for a medium-size "planche marbreé polyéthylène") from Mora (33/1/4508-1924; www.mora.fr).

Items marked with also appear, with photographs, in our Visual Pantry at www .saveur.com/visualpantry!19.

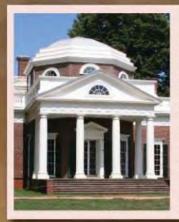
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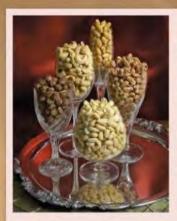
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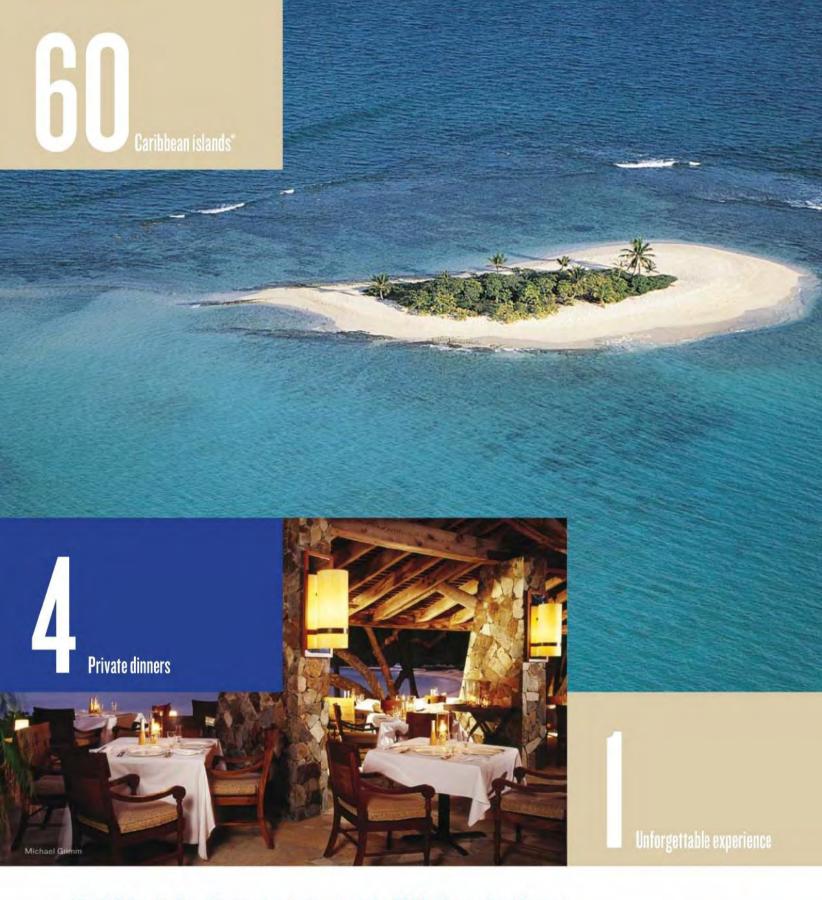


TIME 2:30 P.M., January 15, 2009

PLACE Gramercy Tavern, New York City

A note from the wine director reminds hurried servers that vintage can make a difference.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI



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